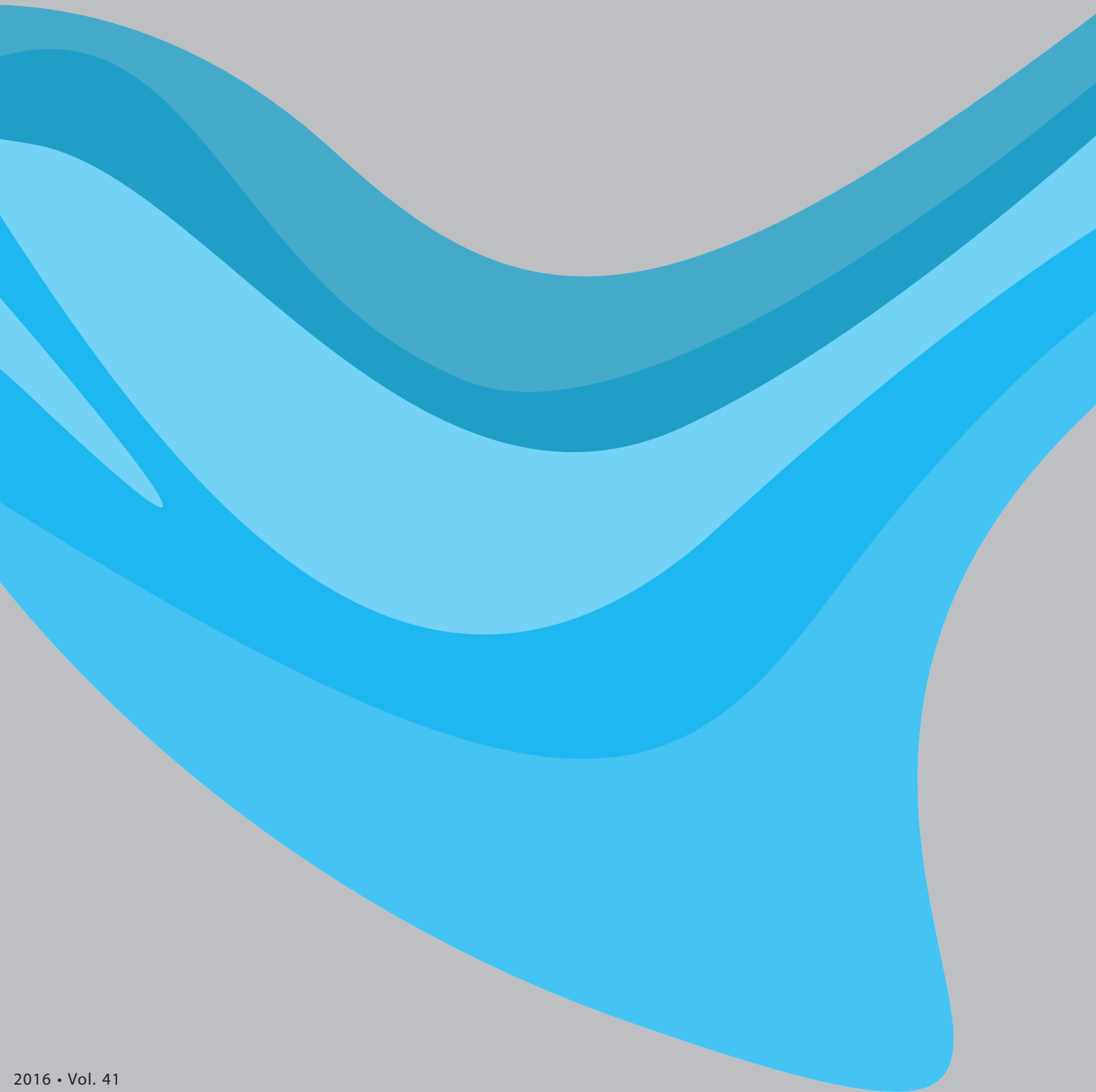


Menagerie

Multiplicity



Mission Statement

Menagerie is the student-run literary and art magazine of Lyons Township High School. Our goal is to showcase and synthesize the works of our talented students in a professional publication. By honoring the writers and artists of our school, we hope to encourage their future work and inspire innovation in our student community.



Menagerie 2016

Multiplicity

Volume 41, 2016

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Editor's Note

The individual exists--distinct, important, unique--and yet is also a portion of a larger whole. A student belongs to a school community, which is one small component of the greater world; the cohesiveness of any system is multiplicity at its finest.

This year's *Menagerie* captures the concept of multiplicity: many elements in a complex relationship that create a cohesive entity. Throughout the magazine's design, elements are conveyed through overlapping colors, shapes and patterns, allowing the viewer to discern individual forms separately and then as a part of the whole composition. To create a more unified layout, the color grey is present on every page.

Multiplicity is present in each piece of writing and art. Throughout masterful literature, writers draw upon individual words and images, combining them to create pictures and emotions that portray an idea and achieve a complete work. Your senses will be activated as "A Tainted Flavor Blast" leaves you with the faint aftertaste of Goldfish while "Meals" haunts you with mere table settings. You will empathize with the unique sisterly bond in "Syndrome" and immerse yourself in the predatory instincts of "Paranoid." As revealed by "Labyrinth" and "Words," our poems look at what the manipulation of words can conceive. Varied and complex, these poems look at the world, at love, at the absurdities and ironies, and even at the "Moon and the Stars," expressing the multiplicities of life. Simultaneously, the artwork reveals in its structure and its design the ways in which there are many small parts operating to achieve the whole: in "Stitching What She Sees Fit" or "Regulars," our art reveals objects that are not often grouped together. Furthermore, made evident by "Bottled City," ceramics is an exercise in multiplicity because it captures the severity of current events in an unexpected medium. Multiplicity is all about digging up the idiosyncrasies buried within the ordinary.

Multiplicity stands for merging everything unique and distinct into a unified compilation. We seek to honor our talented writers and artists not only by showcasing their work, but by asking our readers to immerse themselves in the wondrous whole that is *Menagerie*.

Natalie Krause
Editor-in-Chief

Dheeksha Ranginani
Managing Editor



I Feel Weird • Rachael Larsen • Mixed Media

When I Am Asked

By Erin Hamilton

When I am asked
how I began writing poems,
I talk about the world's indifference.
It was the day we abandoned home,
a brilliant June day,
my city bustling.
I sat staring out my bedroom window
at an insultingly busy street
where travelers were as deaf
as the ears of drunken sleepers
and chattering children's backs were turned.
Nothing was black or broken
and no cracks disrupted the roads
and their voices blared endless reminders
of why we must go.
I sat staring out my bedroom window
at those unsympathetic faces
of hope and false prosperity
and placed my loneliness
in the mouth of language,
the only thing that would grieve for me.

Vertigo

By Laura McAllister

Her hips were two sail ships, bursting out
of an unruly sea. Knobbed uncertain knees,
ankles at the base of a teetering frame,
swaying. She ate a sack of fries
like it was a show. I watched her stringy skeleton
bow and crumple and I didn't know.

I am anchored in her ribcage
and I roll beneath her skin. I'm in her lungs
and out of breath. We're so far from the dock.

A Light in the Distance

By Ruby Rocha

The street called Park Place was the last to receive the touch of any streetlight. It's only me and my Baby now, the only light provided was from her headlights. I can see the water droplets floating in the air as the light penetrates the fog. It's a good thing I've taken this trip a thousand times, any other wanderer would surely get lost. I relax into my seat and start getting lost in my thoughts, thinking about the family reunion that was waiting up ahead on the road, where the family lake house is, when a sudden *BOOM!* occurs.

The sound fills the air shortly before I begin turning the wheel in a panic trying to gain control of Baby again. I come to an abrupt stop on the side of the road. As nausea and dizziness start to creep in, I have to sit still for a moment. The stars in my eyes fade away, and I slowly get out of the car and try to figure out what exactly just happened. I do a lap around Baby and find the culprit. Something along the road had popped her tire. Great. I take a clear look at my surroundings and study them. Everything's too still around here at this time of year. Only the sound of crickets keeps one company but also has the ability to incite madness. Any other person would merely see that there is a seemingly infinite amount of trees all around them, but fortunately, after all these trips down here, I recognize at which point of the road I'm on. I also keenly remember that there is a house not too far from this point.

On all the drives that I've taken down here, this particular house has always caught my attention as I sped by. Anyone can easily lose sight of it if they didn't take the time to look because it's covered by trees and very hard to make out. I had first discovered that this house existed when I was eight. I was staring out the car window trying to catch sight of a deer when I noticed a light in the distance in the dark of night. And ever since then I had paid attention every time I've gone down this road and had realized that there was a house in this particular spot that always had that one light on. And it wasn't a porch light, but rather, a light shimmering through a window. Same window every time too. The third floor, right in the middle, an attic light perhaps.

I shake myself from my mental distraction and begin walking up the road. It wasn't until I reached the driveway of the house that I felt a terrible chill. It was the creeping feeling you felt whenever you feel someone else's eyes on you. I look around but spot nothing: no person or animal, just the sway of the branches and rustle of leaves. I noticed the light of the attic window washing over me and my surroundings. I look up just in time to finish seeing the sway of the curtains. Someone was watching me from the window. I reassure myself that they must notice a stranger approaching their house. Shaking off the chills I walk forward thinking that I'll just use their phone and be in and out.

I wait for a while, even after the third ring of the bell. I was about to give up until I heard the bolts of the door begin to slide open. The door swung open abruptly and a woman of late 40s stood before the doorway. "What do you want?" said the woman in a raspy, harsh tone. The look in her eyes was wild, with a tint of red as if she hasn't slept for days. She wasn't one who took care of her looks either. Her hair was covered in grays and knots, tightly wrapped behind her head. She wore an old gray shawl, covered in holes. "Who is it!?" yelled a man from deep within the house. "That's what I'm trying to figure out!" yelled back the woman, and then once again she turned her crazy eyes to me.

"I...I'm Eric. My family's got a lake house just a few miles down the road but unfortunately my tire went flat and I was just wondering if I could use a phone...please?" There was a long silence in the air. Her look was a little skeptical for a moment, but something about me must have amused her for there was a hint of a smile on her face. If it wasn't for her softer tone this time, I would have thought it was a cruel smile. "Well you're a young fellow aren't ya? No more than twenty eh? Come on in, of course we got a phone."

I stepped through the door rather hesitantly, but remembered my desperate need for a phone and proceeded forward. The nuts and bolts of the door made me jump as they projected a loud sound sliding back



Marauders • Reed Doubek • Photography

into their chambers. I looked around the house and noticed that it was just as well kept as the woman. Dust made its home in the corners and possible mice in the cracks of the walls. I turned around and the woman was standing there, eyeing me like a fox would a turkey. "Well the phone's in the kitchen. Why don't ya take a seat in the parlor over there?"

I did as she told me, and she disappeared into a room. It must be some obstacle out there to get to that phone, for I felt like I was waiting for an eternity. I could hear soft whispers the woman must be exchanging with that man I heard earlier. I was beginning to feel annoyed when a shine caught the corner of my eye. I turned to see a picture of a young girl. Pretty too, with long, brown hair and emerald green eyes. This girl can't be the woman in the next room, a daughter maybe? I study the picture further. There's was something vaguely familiar about it. Or maybe just something strange with the way she was posed. She wasn't smiling, in fact she looked caught by surprise. Her hand in front of her forehead, palm out to the camera as if she's trying to hold a person back and protect herself. If anything, this girl looked rather... helpless. *THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!* Something was banging loudly in the room above me.

"Damn it! Go do something about that George!" yelled the woman. I heard the footsteps of a heavy man hurry up the stairs. And then the woman was before me again. "I'm sorry about the racket child. And the delay. Would you like a cup of tea?" *No, what I would like is that phone and to get immediately out of here.*

"Sure." I reply, and she disappears again. As she walked out, I realized that there was a phone hanging on the wall in the hallway that she just disappeared into. I hear her messing with cups in the pantry, and knowing that the man is upstairs, I sneak into the hallway. I reach the phone undetected of my movements, pick up the phone, and...nothing. No ring. Dead silence. There was never a phone line here to begin with.

Panic starts to pound on my heart. This is no ordinary couple, and they've been playing me all along. I try to quietly move to the door but then stop dead. I remembered how loud it would be to try to open all those bolts, loud enough that it would alarm the woman and make her run toward me before I could get to all of them. I hear her footsteps approaching the parlor again. I jump into a room and quietly close the door.

"What? Where did he? George, I can't find him! Get down here now!" I don't know what they plan on doing to me, but I need to get out of here. There's a window on the other side of the room. It reluctantly budes open, but when it finally does the door behind me swings open.

"Here he is! Where do you think you're going?" The man starts running toward me, but I forcefully slide through the window, landing hard on the ground, but I try to shake it off and make a run for it.

I don't even feel all the branches knocking into me and scraping my face. My focus is entirely on the road and then a new spark of hope ignites within me as I see two distinct lights in the distance, recognizing them as car headlights. *Don't look back, just keep going.* I finally reach the road and see the car approaching. I jump right in the middle of the road, waving my arms like a mad man. The wheels screech to a stop. And someone gets out of the car.

"Eric? Is that you?" says a confused voice I recognize as my brother's. "What the heck are you doing man? I thought I saw your car..." I jump in the car. "Get back in the car and drive! Now! Now! Evan! Now!" Evan finally listens to me, and fumbles a little in restarting the car, but gets it running and steps on the accelerator just as soon as I catch a glimpse of the heavy man through the trees. "What happened back there, Eric?"

"Shush! Turn it up, I need to hear." He looked at me with disbelief, but he did as I said.

It was the evening radio news; the spokeswoman announced on the radio: *Today marks another end to the anniversary of Rebecca Michaelson who was kidnapped as a five-year-old child 15 years ago. A heavy burden upon this town who remembers her for her remarkable features of long brown hair and stunning green eyes...*

OCD's Pulse • Amy Borgstrom • Photography







Regulars • Natalie Krause • Photography



Skaters • Peter Scaletta • Printmaking

East Side of Chicago

By Madalyn Velisaris

I must proclaim that our relationship is going quite well. I feel as if we need to acknowledge this honor, so here are a few words:

Your love for me equates to how much money Greece has. George Strait has a greater likelihood of living in Texas than the chances of us being together. You are the Battle of Waterloo and I am Napoleon. It is completely delusional and never gets a chance. Saying that we would be a good couple would be like saying Bonnie and Clyde were completely wholesome and very much into safety. Our bond is as strong and pure as Israel's relations with Palestine.

Just like the east side of Chicago, our relationship simply does not exist.



Menagerie • 13

Revelation • Claire Meany • Printmaking

La Vie en Rose

By Kate Miklosz

In a wood not so far from here,
I eternalized something
far greater than words that can be written.
I was alone.
with only my glossy thoughts
due to a dewy haze,
casting itself over the awakening shrubbery
at this finest hour.
Glancing over the clamorous grass,
the greenery expelled their tales of adventures and travelers.
The sun was appearing over the horizon,
carrying its streams of weary beams
into the branches of the hibernating trees
left from the brutal winter.
My differing sentiments left me puzzled.
What should I spend my time alone thinking about?
Take the path of nature
and its gregarious outbursts?
Or look to the horizon
and all the unfinished tidings it brings?
And yet,
in the midst of all my
utter bewilderment,
my heart speaks over my mind.
It draws itself to you.
It yearns for your warmth on this cold spring morning.
And while I breathed in the cold air,
I felt my differing feelings,
contrasting emotions,
differing trails of thought.
I mindlessly float in a sea of rosy pink illusions.
Suddenly,
the lifeless branches turn into such an array of beautiful leaves.
The harsh rays of the sun become anew in my mind,
and I think of them more as a blessing
than a cursing reminder that I yet again forgot glasses.
You leave me like this.
always feeling revitalized,
hopelessly in love,
and colorblind to all but rosy pink.



Spout of Dreams • Sarah Reardon • Ceramics



Portrait • Anna Pilipuf • Painting

Star Chasing

By Vitaliy Oprysko

"Noooo, its Betelgeuse!" he vociferated, puffing out his chest like an indignant child.

"No, no, no, no, no! Vyacheslav Mikhailovich it's Sirius!" Kamenev retorted. His eyes escaping direct contact with Molotov's from underneath his overbearing glasses, uncertain of the validity of his claim.

"Fine! Let us put it up to a higher intellect than us; let's ask Comrade Stalin what star in the sky that is. He's bound to know!" continued Molotov, still subtly insisting upon his right.

They departed the dacha's balcony as they went inside to use the telephone. When they rung up the General-Secretary he replied in an annoyed and slow voice, "What is it?"

"Comrade Stalin" Molotov began, "Lev Borisovich and I have fallen into disagreement as to what a certain star in the sky is – I say it's Betelgeuse and he says it's Sirius! I am right, am I not?" he finished rather sharply towards the end.

"Comrade Molotov how should I know? Call the Planetarium if you are dying to know!" He abruptly hung up.

It was sometime around 1 a.m. when he received a call from the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (Molotov – V.O.) asking about a certain star in the sky. While picking his nails, he slowly replied that he would telephone back as soon as he *figured* it out. The Director of the Planetarium anxiously looked over the stacks of papers upon his desk. He had a number of lists on 'Tsarists,' 'Bourgeois Nationalists,' 'Intellectuals,' 'Fascists,' but nothing related to stars or constellations. His years of torturing prisoners were of no help. He realized that he would need to contact someone to find out the star and he pulled out a list of Planetarium employees. He quickly reached for his "dog-phone" (his youngest son Misha had drawn a rainbow colored dog on his white telephone one day when he came in to the office) and called Agent --.

"Comrade --."

"Yes Chief."

"I need you to drive out to the house of Comrade A- and ask him about a certain star."

"Yes Chief."

Around 1:40 a.m., a black car rolled up alongside the sidewalk of Worker's Street. Three men clad in black exited out and began to nonchalantly approach the house of Comrade A-. The owner, disturbed by the lights, locked his window and saw the men and the car. He heaved a great sigh and turned his head towards the floor in a childish look of guilt and shame. He eyed his prized diagrams of constellations and posters of galaxies for one final time and crashed through his window and onto the concrete sidewalk below.

"Chief."

"Yes Comrade."

"There's been an incident. Comrade A- only specializes in falling stars."

"Damn... Go instead to Comrade B-'s house."

"Yes Chief."

Nightmares plagued his dreams that night and he clutched his blanket for comfort. Suddenly, he heard a knock on the door. Petrified, he leaped out of bed and eyed the clock on the wall- 2:20 a.m. In a panic he put on some garments: some pants, a shirt, and his favorite red slippers, the ones his mother gave him for his birthday. He then made the horrific trek from his bedroom to the door, shaking incessantly along the way. Oddly enough, the last thing he could think about was the fear and terror he felt when, as a child, his indignant father eyed him for speaking improperly – and then nothing.

"Comrade B- we have some questions for you. Comrade? Comrade?! Quick get over here; I think he's having a heart attack!"

"Chief."

"Yes Comrade."

"I am afraid that Comrade B- specializes only in dying stars."

"Blast it! Find Comrade C- and find the name of that star!"

"Yes Chief!"

"Chief."

"Comrade have you found the name of that star?"

"No Chief, Comrade C-."

"Find Comrade D- then! I want that star!"

"Yes Chief!"

"Chief! I've figured out the name of the star!"

"Forget it, Comrade. There's been an incident... the people that wanted to know the name of the star no longer need to. There is no one to tell."

*Note to the reader: Molotov and Kamenev were two leading Communists during Stalin's regime.



Starry Night • Timothy Kogucki • Photography

Middle School

By Caroline Garrow

August: Freedom falls short as again I don my modest cargo shorts fresh off the Macy's sales rack, regarded with a mere eyebrow raise and head shake from the twenty-something behind the checkout counter. White sneakers are popular, but mom insisted that I'd only muck them up before they hit the ground, so black it is, one size too big to give room to grow. We grabbed thick flannels off the rack; they will be more expensive in the winter, so we get them on sale, with one more raised eyebrow from the cashier.

Hardly breathing in the dense late-summer humidity, thighs sticking to laminated desks. Seat belts scorch undeserving legs. Everybody is new.

September: Trees begin to show more skin, the equivalence of a 50s swim model; naïve by today's standards but duly noted in their time. Walking home, I step on scattered leaves, every now and then hitting a game of hopscotch or a start and finish line scratched out on the pavement. I can't help but to oblige, "Well if you insist, Mr. Sidewalk, I suppose I must hop the scotch."

Locker doors slam with resonance. I've got the hang of this.

October: And...I still can't remember my teachers' names! "Yes...uh...Ms. McLarson?" Yes, my lipgloss is poppin', but that is irrelevant. Old friends have been long lost to the void that is Middle School. The draw is undeniable. So is my social life.

Fake blood and teeth in the hallway. Real blood and teeth on the stairs.

November: Ouch! Hot and salty blood seeps from the slice in my finger as I instinctively bring it to my chapped lips. I don't know what's more offensive, fashioning Indian headdresses out of cardstock, or straight-up cardstock. I swear I've slit my fingertips on that stuff more times than tribes have filed lawsuits against the Washington Redskins, or vice versa.

Give Thanks to the Dixon Ticonderoga: "The Only Pencil for the Emotional Wreck that You Are™"



Lyrik • Claire Meany • Drawing

December: Red and gold tinsel at the Macy's storefront. Children's eyes gleam in window-display bliss. Leggings grace the upper-middle class, froufrou drinks in hand, they regard us as prey. I remember something from history class about social Darwinism, and feel that it fits here. Everyone is somewhat familiar with Darwin's theory of evolution, but social Darwinism is more like this: a bunch of rich white guys a few centuries ago said "well...we're better off, with our mighty God and frilly pants, so we must be more evolved than 'them.'" 'Them' being everybody that wasn't a rich white guy with a mighty God and frilly pants. Basically, they started taking lands and riches and were entitled jerks, acting 'above it all,' like they were an entirely different, highly evolved species of elites. I can only assume that that's what they see now. A lesser being, an untouchable.

Capitalism discovers its true potential: supplementing family time and a spirit of giving with miniature tea cups, Barbie dolls and race cars.

January: Christmas snow turns to ochre sludge; drenching my kneecaps, capsizing my galoshes. I begrudgingly trudge, slushing to school. My house is too close to the school for bus services, but too far for a benevolent stroll. Whether dodging flying muck from speeding teens or keeping my balance on onyx ice, I have embarked on a mission that I never accepted. This is the jungle, but my throat is far too hoarse to roar.

New Year's Resolutions: 1) Become famous 2) Fail to become famous but win a pie eating contest 3) Lose the pie eating contest and get a participation ribbon 3) Hang that participation ribbon up, and feel proud about accomplishing my New Year's Resolution 4) Realize it was all a dream 5) Eat pizza for breakfast to fill the ever-growing gorge within my soul 6) Realize that I HAVE ACTUALLY COME UP WITH THE MOST REALISTIC NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION EVER! 7) Feel accomplished 8) Eat more breakfast pizza.

February: Lovers' season is upon us, and quite frankly, I forgot to gouge out my eyes: my mistake. I don't understand the urge for twelve year olds to couple up, isn't it a little early to "settle"?

Three Hershey's Kisses, Two Cherry Fun-Dip's, and an awkwardly worded letter from Paul.

March: Lukewarm cocoa in hand, I sit on the benches out front, awaiting the shrill ring that will relieve me of my discomfort. Clustered out front, a petri dish of angst smothers the door, awaiting its opening. A light drizzle, and suffocating fog encase us in a wet and miserable cocoon. I can't help but to think that a monsoon would be ever more entertaining than this, more deadly, yes, but certainly more exciting.

In like a lion, out like a lamb. In like a drowned rat, out like another drenched rodent.

April: Judgement day has come in the form of Six Flags: Great America. The whole grade embarks on another "educational excursion." We engorge ourselves with funnel cakes heaped with whipped cream, dripped with chocolate and suffocated in powdered sugar then whip through the air, plunge into nothingness. Super-sized slush ice to glaciare the brain and giant popcorn, dressed in a blanket of warm liquid butter to retard the heart. Thrusted, twisted and thrown by hoop, loop and swoop. Two jumbo pretzels rolled in salt, lubricated with mustard to slide down my gullet. Needless to say I hurled twice that day: once through the springtime stratosphere, and once on Charlotte Trinidad's Steve Madden's.

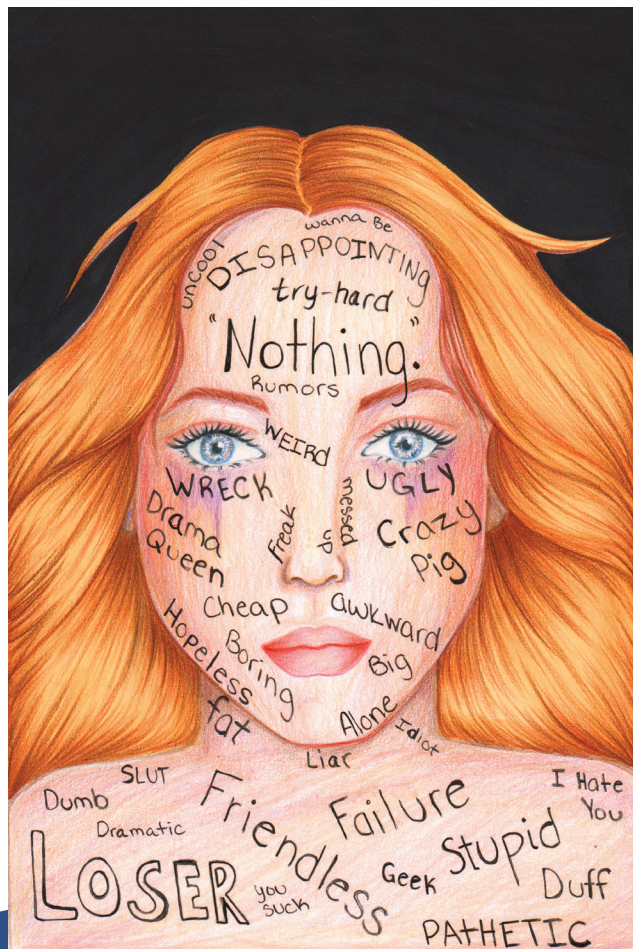
April showers bring May flowers...and Mayflowers bring pilgrims.

May: No.

Farewell, mes amis. I'll remember you all in therapy.



The Window to the Soul • Megan Aletich • Drawing



Cordelia • Sarah Gorecki-Westrick • Drawing

Bodies and Minds

By Clara Olsen

Beauty is untaught.
We learn to see in numbers and nouns.
We start to love in lists:
A brunette, perhaps, pale, tall, skinny—
Do we get to decide?

I relearned myself—
that bodies are beautiful,
without condition.

Beauty is a synonym of magic:
battles from the inside out.
The implication of sonder.
To fall in love with a reminder
of thoughts no one will hear.

The way blue-and-white checkerboard
shines under my feet,
and the windows show only ink and car lights.
They don't tell you about the times
where every stranger
gets to be flawless.



My Garage · Desa Bolger · Photography

lender who hides his real occupation under the pretence of being a financier.

"I have heard rumours that he has half the peerage under his thumb," he said with a smile. "The what high society you would move in."

With a toss of her head she turned and ran lightly up the staircase.

"I shall sit next to him at dinner, then," she called out, with a heartily hearty laugh.

To her last companion's disgust it was exactly where she did sit. But there, sitting beside the young Reggie Rowmands and Tommy Ludways, Avril's brother. Both had been to Brooklands the previous day and both had only one topic of conversation—speed. He listened outwardly polite inwardly bored. Avril sat next opposite to him and her eyes had a mischievous twinkle in them whenever she looked across at him. He seemed to be paying special attention to the financier, and he was obviously flattered. Leonard Bilsiter was not a very possessing man, with his beady eyes and heavy jowl, and Lulworth wondered why Lord Rowmands had invited him down. He could make a pretty shrewd guess. Either Rowmands wanted money or owed money to Bilsiter. For his own sake Bilsiter would certainly never get invited anywhere.

There came one of those sudden silences which descend so unexpectedly upon a dinner table when one person speaking seems to be doing so in unnaturally loud tones. The solitary voice was Bilsiter's. His face was slightly flushed.

"Of course I have been threatened by this man Sheen," he was saying. "I should have got out of it if I hadn't."

Instantly the silence was broken and every eye was turned on the financier. It was long and terrible, with perhaps, the exception of one who devotedly hoped that whatever the threat the mysterious Sheen had made he would make it good this time. Bilsiter evidently thoroughly enjoyed the attention which was suddenly focussed on him and he needed but little prompting from a whisper of those sitting next to give details.

"My business doesn't always bring me friends," he

garden. I shall not detain you for very long. You may be sorry—

She looked at him with startled eyes. There was an underlying threat in his unfinished sentence which puzzled her. For a moment her whole nature rose in revolt. Then curiosity overcame her, and with it an idea that she might have put a wrong construction on his words. She had no idea at all, indeed, why the moneylender should threaten her, though he had pestered her with his attentions.

"I give you ten minutes, Mr. Bilsiter," she cried with forced gaiety in her tone. "After that I really must come in. I have promised to make a four at bridge."

"Ten minutes will suffice," he replied politely. "And I hope that what I have said will not upset your play at all."

Avril shrugged her shoulders. She passed through the French window into the hall, where Sir Richard was standing on the steps leading down to the bowmands. The former brought his closed fist down on his open palm as he said something in a low voice, and then turned quickly at the crunch of Bilsiter's foot on the gravel. With the air of a child caught in some overcoat, Avril was led by the peer and his companion, uttering some commonplace conventional words to the man by his side.

Lulworth laid a hand on the other's arm as the two passed out of sight.

"Run along and look after your guests," he said quietly. "And don't worry about what you have told me. Things are never what they seem. To-morrow morning—well, to-morrow morning anything might have happened."

Lord Rowmands opened his mouth to speak. There was a strained, anxious look on his face and his hands were clenched. He shook one fist angrily in the direction taken by Avril and her companion. Sir Richard's hand tightened on his arm.

"Control yourself," he said quietly. "Bilsiter will overreach himself yet. I will have a talk with him and see what can be done." The elder man passed his hand slowly over his forehead,

Meals (after Anne Sexton)

By Clara Olsen

I talk to ghosts every evening.
We sit around a blue tablecloth
and a vase of half-dead lilies
as pale as the plaster walls.
When I close my eyes
I am a doll
with a porcelain face,
an empty gaze,
a permanent state of being.
When I open them
the space between us is filled
with twill sleeves,
with saltshakers,
with empty questions,
as if none of us knows that we're gone.



Eye Spy • Anna Pilipuf • Printmaking

Gas Station

By Andrea Simms

A spectacular show of
skins and tattoos
muffling up a story.
A bottle
is abruptly
unhinged from
the clutch of a
love child.
All of them hold
a little breath
in every tire. Handprints
and dog breeds, maybe
even a baby on board?
The spearmint surfaces,
the slicing speedometer
the push-to-start,
the in-your-face, all
repairs of a
money making marriage.
These are the
mechanics of immortality,
but if you
let your gaze
travel you might
catch the girl in the back seat,
dizzy with the
smell of new car,
balancing her bus ticket
on raw,
chicken scratch
finger nails.



Self-Portrait • Noah Denten • Mixed Media

A Tainted Flavor Blast

By Andrew Callahan

Dear October 7th, 2005

Every so often, I come to interrogate the events of you, the seventh, just as historians probe the causes of a genocide. I reluctantly comprehend that you have subsumed the ones around me with a perception of arrogance and an overly presumptuous nature. I curse your day that gave me a poisoned voice of determination and an unwillingness to be mistreated. I hold the belief that a concrete scrutiny of your horrid occurrences may help you see your transgressions.

Your day inaugurated with a simple sun that rose over the eastern trees in my backyard. The mellow glow that soothed through the windows of the room sparked the commencement of my day. I surprisingly woke up on my own accord in those days. With purpose and childlike merriment, I floated into the kitchen where a toasted waffle and saturated corn flakes awaited for my consumption. You started with such an easy and flowing disposition, just as most of my Kindergarten days did, that it is to no wonder that I perceive this day with acrimony and abandonment due to the misfortunes that would later ensue.

I, and my peers, lingered on that lifeless slab of pavement that we were immorally confined to as your witch's pot of calamity was to be soon descending upon me. Not even moments after I entered that upbeat classroom, you possessed the mind of a true friend to gift me a bag of your purest demonic tokens, Flavor Blasted Goldfish. Sirens they were; they tempted me with their soft smile and body kissed by fire. My breath, lightly swirling the loose powder off the top of its frail crust, was the last thing I can recall until I was able to gape at the nefarious horridity that had erupted, not only from my mouth, but from a deeper consciousness. Although it was not enough for you to present me with the ignominy of vomit strewn along the carpet, no, you bedeviled my elderly teacher into articulating the words, "Drew, clean that up!" Never before had such a rage assembled in my mind as when the laughs of young boys and grotesque countenances on the girls arose into my field of perception. The tears fell and I declared, "No!" for it was your blunder and possession of autonomous minds that caused this to happen. How is this my duty? It was clearly your misdeed!

Your aberrant day, possession, and repercussions commenced my voice. I now hold a voice that many perceive as myself refusing to be wrong and extreme arrogance, when in a darker reality, it is my persistent internal fight still radiating from your day. The emotions of guilt, embarrassment, and anger resonate with me to this day so that I refuse to be mistreated, refuse to be blamed, and refuse to be taken wrong! It was you that presented me with this curse, and it has not ceased to cause an abundance of arguments amongst close friends and family. I condemn you, October 7th, 2005!



Super Hero • Cain Nocera • Photography



Seaside View • Lucy Hawblitzel • Mixed Media

She Ripped Out My Brain

By Dirk Molek

She ripped out my brain
and threw it on the ground
and dug her spiked heels
into my temporal lobe
tap dancing on my cerebellum
and ripping apart
my cerebral cortex
with an angel's grin.



Circle of Thoughts · Heather Munyon · Drawing

Unspoken

By Clara Olsen

In his front yard on a Saturday afternoon, Dominic met a girl without a name. She told him upfront, unrelenting. He asked her if she wanted one. She said she might, in the future.

She was a year younger than him and moving in next door. For as long as he had lived, there was an old treehouse on top of an old tree that went right through the middle of their fence. No one knew who put it there, and no one had taken it down. The neighbors were an old couple, so it had always been his, but now they were gone. Suddenly it was hers.

He hadn't used it since he was eight or nine, but it still felt strange. She went up there every day, always alone. One day his curiosity got the better of him, and he climbed up the railings, looking in. She was lying on her stomach with her work boots right next to his face.

"What are you doing?"

"Working on a project."

And that was how she always responded, from that day on: "a project."

The night she moved in, he had a dream. He was trapped in a room full of shouting strangers and everything sounded like his name. He didn't tell her until much later. But when he did he described it as suffocating.

Every day she would go up to the house, lie on her stomach, and work on the project. There wasn't much room, but Dominic would always find a way to fit in and bother her. He would barely catch glimpses of what she was doing: usually writing or drawing.

They had an unspoken agreement that he wouldn't ask about her. If she wanted to say something, she would.

"Anna. Lucy. Delphinium—" he listed. Coming up with names for her had become a daily activity.

"No, I used to know one," she said, not looking up from her work.

"You used to know a Delphinium?"

"Yeah," she winked.

Dominic found, on the days she was serious, that she thought a lot more than him. Or anyone he knew, really.

"I hate adults," she said, pressing pencil to paper fiercely. "I hate being told not to label myself even more than I hate that whole 'just be you' nonsense."

"Why?" he said, more forcefully than he meant to, and quickly continued, "I mean, aren't they trying to help by saying that?"

"Try being told that you don't have to label yourself in a world that's been labeling you since before you were even born."

He knew about her—he had figured it out a while ago—but never said anything. It felt wrong to say it out loud. He tried to imagine feeling like that all the time.

Dominic waited to see if his overbearing thoughts would become words. Just as he was expecting to give up and let her be, he opened his mouth. "Is it dehumanizing, then, to not have a name?"

"Not as much as it was to have one."

She only went one day without working. Instead, her head fell against the thin wooden wall and her arms wrapped around her body. She didn't say a word. Her lips, and her eyes, were lined with red.

He could sit with her for only a minute before he started shaking. The silence hit him hard,

as if the tree itself were crumbling, and there was nothing he could do to stop them both from barreling toward the ground. So he left. Later, while cocooned in blankets and central heating, he felt weak and selfish.

The next day, he asked if she was okay. It was like someone had turned the switch in her brain to positive—there was no going back to yesterday. She worked on her project, and she had even been the one to come up with names this time, but he agreed that none of them felt right for her.

He told her she was like a superhero.

"Because they have two identities, right? Their real one and the one they show people. So they can fit in and don't get attacked by villains all the time."

She laughed and teasingly called him a nerd. But later, he was sure that he caught her drawing a cape.

It was a dreary Saturday when Dominic's mom brought him shopping. He didn't complain, although he normally would have. He wanted to try thinking about things the way they really were—here, outside, where people expect you to be what you look like. They walked past window after window, all portraying his faint reflection on top of clothing, collectables, and customers.

He flipped up his hood, the dark reflection in the store window creating waves around his neck.



At The Confectionery

By Laura McAllister

it's because of the strawberry cheeks,
the cocoa freckles, the white chocolate hair
drizzled lazily on top; the wrists of vanilla,
the faces of unkempt peach, the caffeine fingertips
on anaemic knees. it's because
of the caramel on our hands,

the brown-paper promises, the way they crinkle
in our palms, the way they tumble
into the trash—it's because
of this that we mistake mint
for safety, sweet syrup of the mouth
for honesty, sugary glazes
for shining spirit.

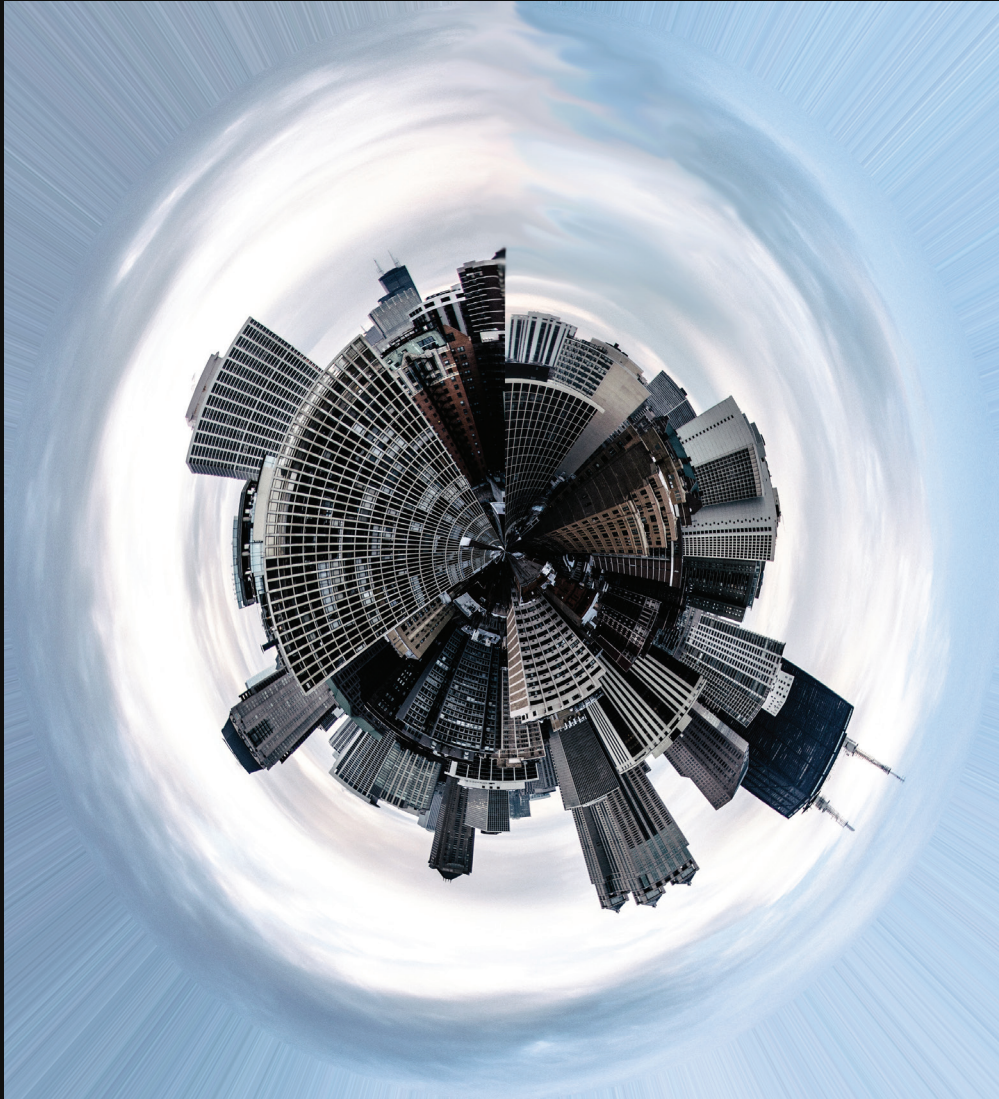
It's because of all of this that we take
those steps to the counter, press
our aspirations into the glass, and, our voices
like a handful of glistening cherries, murmur,
"This one."



Bubbles • Marina Auwerda • Photography



Grandfather • Maranda Jackson • Painting



Mini World • Kyle Niego • Digital

Labyrinth

By Magdalena Katsoudas

Her brain is a maze
Τι χαρά, τι χαρά
A labyrinth of ideas that
C Major has no sharps or flats
Have been shoved into her mind
US government has 3 branches
Thoughts scattered around
Charlemagne made a just court in Europe
Facts blending seamlessly into each other
Analytical verbs
Slowly they begin to
1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a
Make her go mad
Biodegradable substances
One small piece at a time
4y + 3x (6532 436)
= 8578032
Until it all just
J'adore manger, et tu?
Explodes out of her



Fly By • Cain Nocera • Photography



Funk II • Cain Nocera • Photography



Where Do We Go From Here • Katrina Pasquinelli • Mixed Media



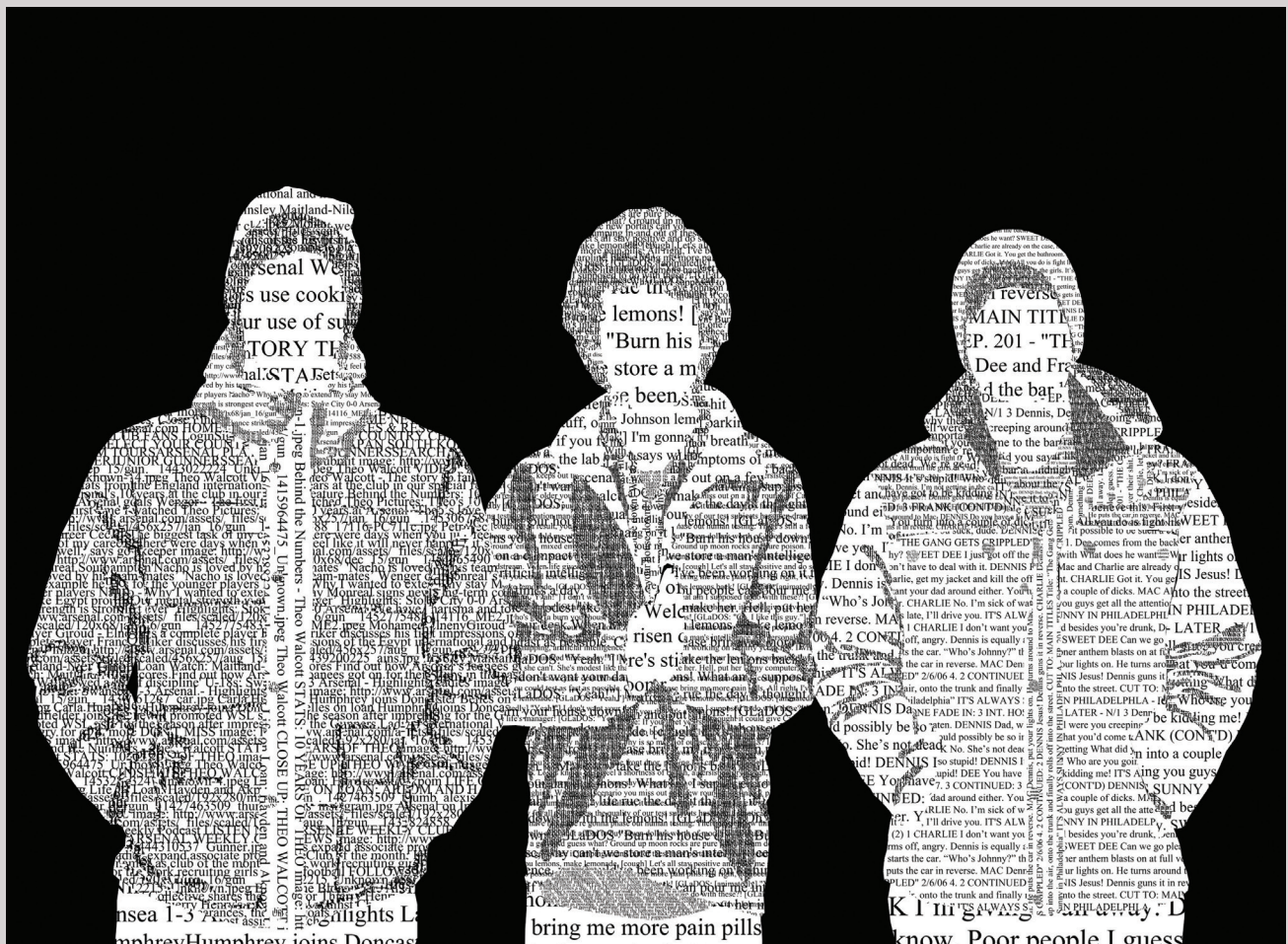
Flower Pot • Meredith Gebhart • Ceramics

Words

By Francesca Restani

Words are never our own. We steal them from the mouths of others. We pluck them like daisies from our ancestors, and we try so hard to make them our own. Every single vowel, every consonant, every sound - it's someone else's.

But sometimes, once in a millennium, someone comes along and says something so profound that it resonates in you, in the core of your very being, inside the nooks and crevices of your brain, buried beneath your first kiss or your last goodbye. And it almost never happens. Never. When it does, you want to scream it from your rooftop at three a.m., drown yourself in the ocean of those words, and damn it, you are that quote. It's you, it's in your bones, it's a part of your miserable being, it's a part of you at your best. And at that point, it doesn't matter if it's yours or not. Someone out there said that for you, so it's yours to keep. Screw the fact that it's not you who said it, screw that it's not your words, screw it. It's you. It's yours to keep. So make it your own, thank the author, and live by it. And don't ever forget it.



El Cuento de los Tres Hombres · Graham Voetberg · Digital



Hold the Phone • Lauren Trail • Photography

Prompt 101: How Often Do You Cry?

By Elizabeth DeSae Silva

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus number 254 was always left halfway open, frosting the drawings on the leather seatback we examined on our way to school. Laughter bubbles out of us into the air around the two person seat, cute sounds practically pulled out of us by the sky. Eyelids crinkle together, pushed together by upturned, rosy cheeks. Teardrops are coaxed out of our hilarity, and they are as happy as we are.

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus 254 was always left halfway open, welcoming a breeze that chilled the little sardine-students nestled inside. I hold the hand of a story nearing her end, or maybe she holds mine. The moments before her last breaths are traumatic, heaving and churning, but in an instance before she bids me goodbye, she resolves. Resolution that pulls my lifeblood out of my eyes.

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus 254 was always left halfway open, vainly trying to intimidate the sleepiness of our eyes. I shiver but am no more awake than I am warm. My love, the moon, waits in the sky for me. I do adore seeing her in the morning. Her own pallor is more fit against that of a sunrise sky. A yawn makes my jaw creak and pushes raindrops from the corners of my eyes.

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus 254 was always left halfway open, stirring up our carefully placed selves. I worry for my unfastened face. Should I come undone, I would rather die than live. My stability is as delicate as the lifeline holding me to the morning. An eyelash forsakes me. I jam my finger into my eye in chase. I lose her and my eyes decide to flush her out.

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus 254 was always left halfway open, pulling wintertime crispness into the school day stuffiness of our dear student-bringer. I am refreshed, catching a glimpse of the day I am leaving behind for the privilege and duty of education. Gratefulness for the fresh air does not mean I resent my destination. I wish for my moon to come visit in my morning. The window allows in a gust of air that strikes me in the eyes and we taste blood. I am not strong enough to argue with the wind. I pray icicles do not form about my eyes.

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus 254 was always left halfway open, creating a sense of urgency in watching the sidewalk pass. When someone new pilots our dear in-betweeners, the carriage tends to be late to school, or rather, later than I come to prefer. I fear for the lack of leisure between arriving and learning, cower before the prospect of rushing about. I am not willful enough to bring us there in time. Worry worry worry over pitiful, meaningless things brings despicable makeup-ruiners to the corners of my eyes.



Religion • Reed Doubek • Photography

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus 254 was always left halfway open, inviting in a chill that cools down the back of my neck. She who sits next to me, today and always, rises up into our metal boat out of maritime turbulence. The problem with mothers is some of them are motherly, but not kind; they build a nest but do not take care. I am too weak to do anything but join her, slowly flooding the boat we take refuge in.

The window above the seat in front of the emergency exit on bus 254 was always left halfway open, making us sure of the air that passes around us, making us sure of our progress and distance. I am not gentle enough to hold the stars from the sky in my hands. Asphalt smells like keys beneath your hands and you wonder when the scenery started moving and not you. Are you alright?

I walk to school now.

The Grandfather Chimes

By Bria Holt

I kept their lives,
hour,
after minute,
after second,
after moment.

Humdrum sometimes caused them to
smash my hands around my face,
wishing with all their might I would go faster.

But other days, days of ball gowns and
kisses and fun found again,
those days I glimpsed their crestfallen eyes as they discovered
the journey my hands had taken within
those few blissful moments.

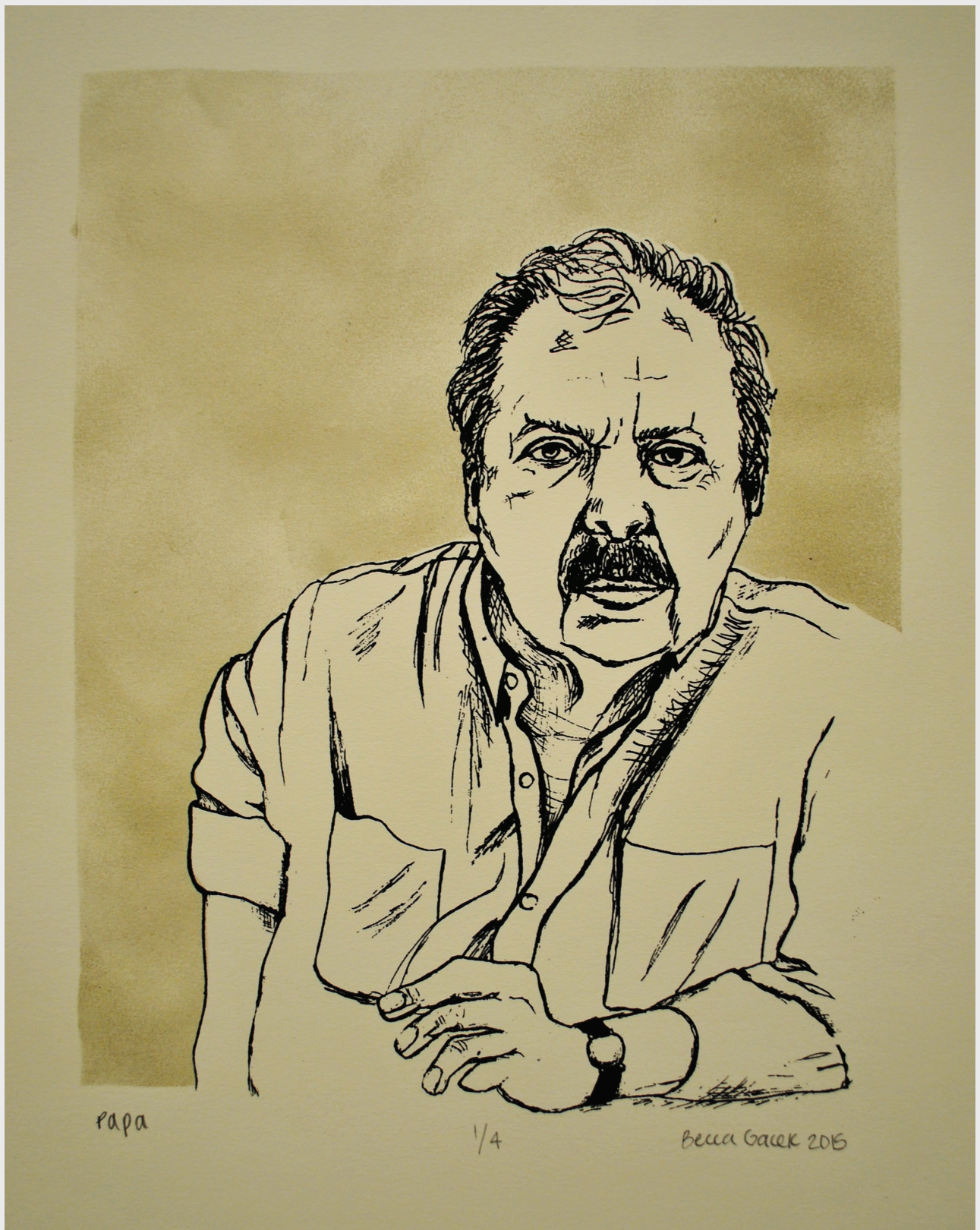
I stood tall, gazing with pride and rapture
at the household
that chose to spend their moments with me.
To stroke their curious fingers across my tarnished face.
To delight in their laughter as
my chest rumbled and
my gears whirled.

But those days have left, replaced by empty halls and empty moments.
I still stand.
I still rumble my chest in hopes that some delicate hand will
reach into my heart and
reset my memory.

It's silent now. Though the grandness of my age
has left me behind,
nostalgia stayed for company.

She stays to watch my hands climb,
my pendulum swing, and
my days
slip by

in a moment.



Papa • Becca Gacek • Printmaking

Winter Nights

By Abigail Cundiff

The snow.

Waltzing softly to the blanketed earth,
swirling silver in the wind,
glittering in the moonlight.

The wind.

creeping through window panes,
invisible fingers,
cold to the touch.

The trees.

Bare branches tap tap tapping in the wind
upon windows of frost flowers
casting spindly shadow arms upon the night covered wall.

The owl.

Calling mournfully into the mysterious dark
beating its wings through skeleton trees,
a silhouette against the lonesome moon.

The stars.

Laughter of small silver bells and clinking crystal cups,
quiet, so distant,
shining alone on their silver sprinkled charcoal sky.

The fire.

Crackling and snapping
throwing dark figures upon the burnt red walls
illuminating the shadowy room.

The people.

Laughing, like the stars,
but louder and harsher
as they sit huddled around the smoky fireplace.

The smoke.

spiraling into the biting wind and snowflakes
ascending to the twinkling ice stars above
on this silver frosted evening.





Cityscape • Desa Bolger • Photography

Paranoid

By Tuck Murray

I will track you,
sniff you out.
You are Dillinger and I am Purvis,
adamant as a bloodhound.

You think you can spot me,
imprudently thinking you can get away.
Amateur,
I am your shadow.

I will ascend and hover above you.
Like an preposterous poker player,
I decipher your every move.
a straight flush could not
protect your overflowing struggle.

When a draft blows on your feet
hanging off your motherly mattress, I am nearly there.
There is a reason I run that shiver down
your spine. I love to see you scuffle,

to attempt to run away from me,
as if it is of service. I will never cease
to spike your helpless conscience.
Only when you feel safe do you really become pungently
in range of my pistol.



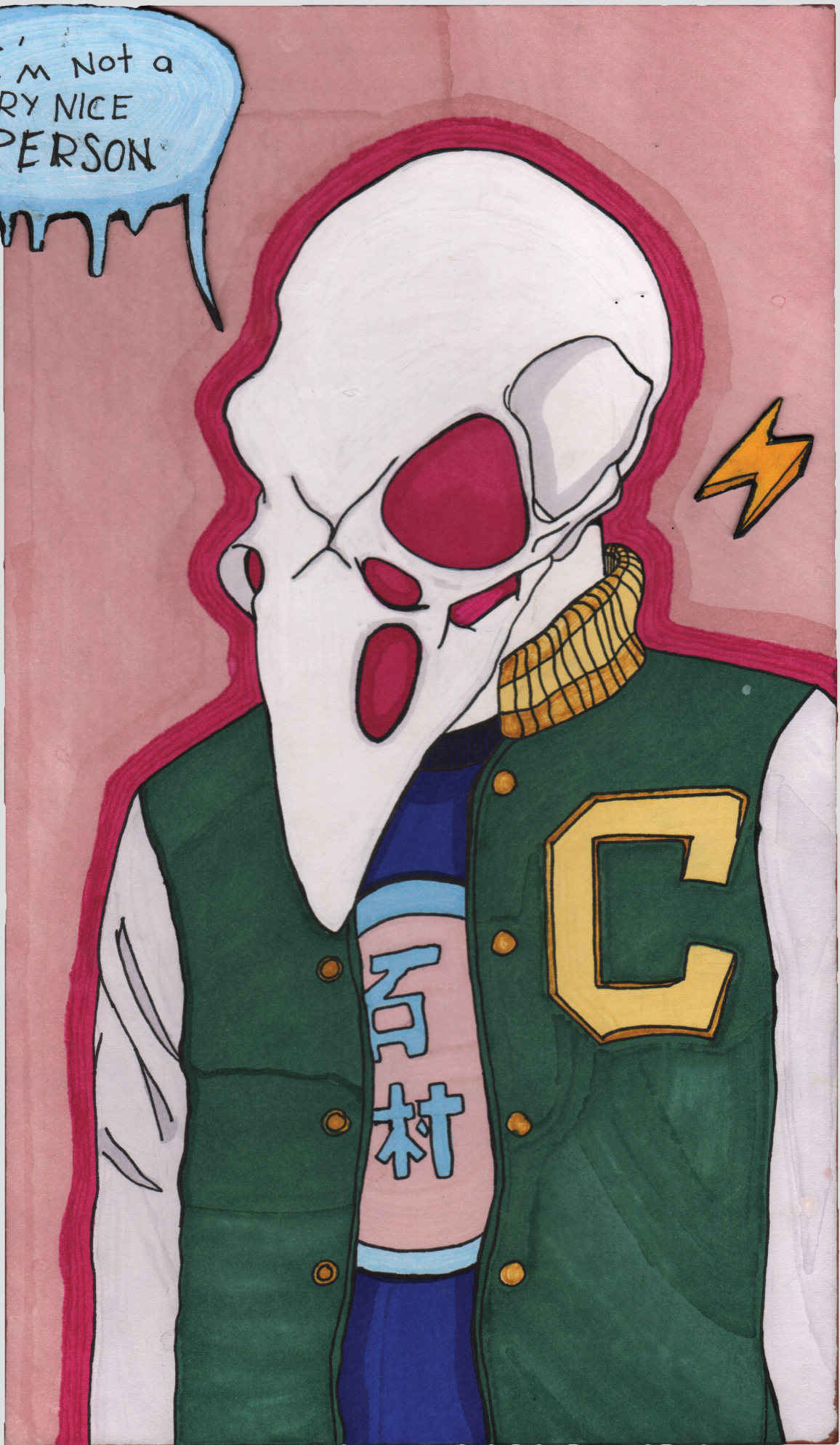
Shenandoah • Emily Flores • Mixed Media

Enemies

By Erin Hamilton

When I was nine, and in church choir,
I made my first ever enemy.
and it was all started by
the inevitable collision of my wounded ego
and his inflated pride
metamorphosed into a scruffy black ballet flat
and an unsuspecting ankle:
a kick in the shin, classic.
Then, it was a damnation,
a binding and irrevocable sentence
to years of the flashing pain of pulled pigtailed
of spitting insults like the sparks of a sputtering candle
of bruises and bloody noses,
of faces aflame under the disappointed gaze of our priests
and, in the silence of the empty church,
the echo of that inevitable collision
and my first enemy's first curse words,
"Go to hell."

I'm Not a
VERY NICE
PERSON



Thermostat

By Laura McAllister

I hate that thermostat the way I hate the cream-colored sweater that conceals my burgundy undershirt. In a direct confrontation with that slab of plastic on the wall, I am tempted to turn up the heat. The button I want to press is red, and the one Mama prefers is blue, pale and worn away from use, just like everything else in this house.

"Mama," I call, the sound quivering through the permafrost tiles. "It's cold in here." The cold has been swaddling me as soon as I step in the door every day for a while now. Sometimes I have to dial the phone with fingers that are flaking and falling away, leaving spots of blood on the keypad.

Her voice cracks through the icy wall of her bedroom. When it reaches me, it's nothing more than a spit of steam scratching the air beside my ear. "It feels fine to me," the steam whispers. "Just leave it."

Bleary, the sleeves of my sweater fall around the equators of my hands. "Can I go to Helena's house, Mama?" I ask.

"You've already gone once this week."

I teeter on the tile. "That was a month ago, Mama."

"Was it?"

"She's throwing a party today, and she'll be mad if I don't go."

"Will there be boys?"

Before I know it, my lips are between my teeth. "Hot ones."

I imagine their breathing. I imagine feeling it. I haven't felt a warm, living thing since Dad disappeared. The house used to crawl with them. My lips are upset; I've drawn blood.

"Will there be alcohol?"

"I don't think so, Mama. But even if there were—" I thumb the stitching on my jeans. "It probably wouldn't be cold enough to suit your tastes."

"What was that?"

"It's too cold, Mama."

The steam converts itself into a snarl of winter wind, trickles down the nape of my neck. "Get in here," it says.

Dad used to make this walk, the one between the kitchen and the bedroom.

"Now, Gina."

Dad was a lottery ticket machine repairman, and he used to stand outside to smoke so Mama wouldn't see. As soon as he came in the door, he would make a sandwich and press coffee into existence; then he would wrap his knuckles around his mug, - which was maroon before he left but Mama scratched off all the paint - throw the sandwich away, and make the walk. Something lingered behind his eyelids as he pushed his feet along, something so completely free of malice that I mistook it for goodness, but that I now know to be complacency. I saw it on those late nights when I would let my eyes glow from the other side of the counter, and the carpet still bears the sighs of his weight, the flecks of dirt he kicked off his shoes, a coffee stain. I am careful to pad softly here. This is haunted ground.

When I peek into Mama's room, I see that she has reinvented herself as a moth caterpillar, a sullen face her only visible human trait. From within a cocoon of dying fleece, her sunken eyes drift absently to my ghost in the doorway.

"Don't touch that thermostat."

"Why does it matter, Mama?"

Her face remains unaffected. "It's our anniversary."

"We're not a morgue."

Her head rolls back as if she had never seen me at all. "He's not dead."

"He's good as dead."

"Don't say that!" she snaps, suddenly violent from somewhere beyond her weary eyes. As she falls back, her voice collapses into a murmur. "Don't say that." But it's too late. The blanket, for all its ashy sadness, has slipped from her shoulder, exposing the crimson undershirt that conceals her chest. "You're bleeding," she says. "You should clean up."

Sometimes Dad would be bleeding when he came out of the bedroom. He'd come out with a nick on his face and make another cup of coffee. "Liquid luck," he'd say into the air, then tip the mug towards his shaky lips. His screwdriver, ever in his pocket, clicked against the counter in time with his uneasiness. The complacency in his eyes sunk away, along with the rest of him, falling into the gaps of the universe, slipping out of reach, right across the counter.

When he left Mama, he left me, too.

"There's some alcohol under the sink," she continues. "And I can get you some new Chapstick when I go out tomorrow."

"Why are you so intent on forcing Dad to stay alive?"

"Maybe I can get you a new sweater. I think that one is getting too dark, from all the washing."

"It's cold in here, Mama."

"What was that?"

"I'm freezing."

"So am I," she murmurs. Slowly, Mama removes a hand from her cocoon. It's thready and it moves to the beat of Dad's screwdriver. I'm scared; she's shaking. There's a flock of liver spots like coffee stains on her skin.

Maybe, I think, maybe Dad left because he was tired of assuring fortunes for everyone else when he came home to such emptiness every day. Maybe Dad left because his hands were cracked and bleeding. Maybe Dad left because he became nothing, and nothing can't be tied down. Mama attempts a knowing smile, but her eyes can't agree on a direction. "So am I."



Blue • Sean Robinson • Photography

Photography

By Abigail Cundiff

"Life stand still here."

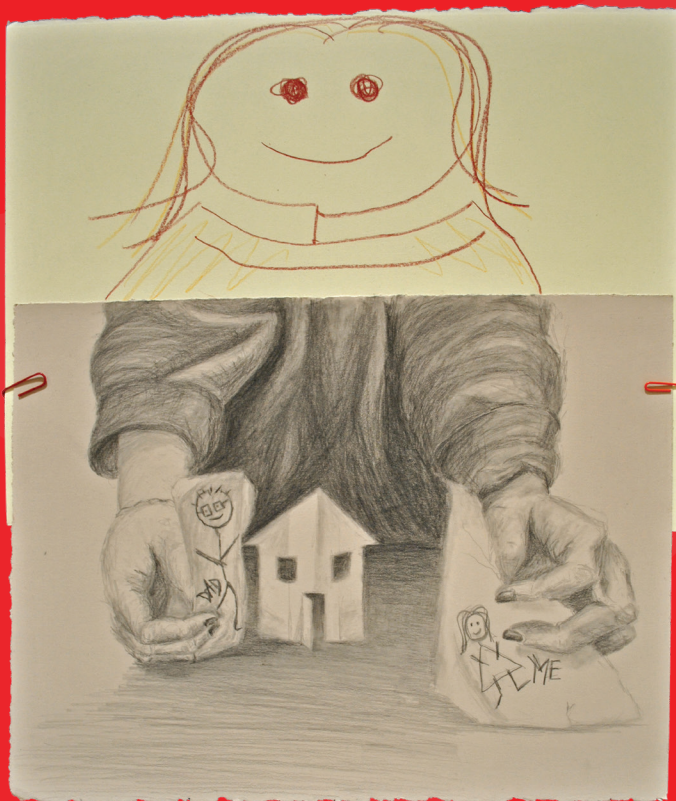
-*To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf

Millennials across the globe click the shutter buttons dozens of times a day and make the other generations cringe. Every other generation tell us we all take too many pictures. "You need to put your cameras down," they all preach. "You've become tourists to your own lives!" It's an odd thing that's happened in the past few decades or so because technology has afforded us the opportunity to take more and more photos with little to no cost at all. A photo used to be precious, they tell us, because there were only so many and they had to be developed. But today, our generation takes so many. "You'll never look at the photos once they're uploaded to the computer," they all sneer. They speak the truth though because rarely do we ever look back at our photos. Why then does our generation continue to hit the shutter button so many times and keep every copy? Why waste the precious space to save something we'll never really look at again?

I like to think that our generation takes its photos, every single one of the many thousands of them, because we need something to hold on to. The world is moving too fast around us and we have no choice but to pick up our feet and run with it. We take our pictures to stop time because the world won't stop moving, except in the eyes of a camera lens. Our photos have turned this ephemeral life, these fleeting moments, into something everlasting. Life will never be the same; it's always different. People won't be the same because we always change. Everyone in the photo will one day be a stranger, and the places in the photos will harbor not the same joy as in years past, but a bittersweet nostalgia in the years yet to come. Yet sometimes we need to cling to the digital images and try to will both mind and body back into the memory, try to transcend time and make it stop for a singular second. Everyone grows up, moves on, sometimes at a neck-breaking speed; some of us won't even take so much as a glance at the pictures in the future, but it's a comfort to know they'll always be there. It's as though that moment is still alive, frozen in time, so we can never lose that moment, so we can never lose ourselves.



Ghostly • Olivia Land • Photography



Houses • Sami Horvath • Mixed Media

Nomad

By Caroline Garrow

Hands gripped by a fingerless stitch,
nearly threadbare, clasped for warmth.
Rubbing over the Times and Tribune,
engulfed in a rusted can
by dancing flames,
whipped by the zephyr of a crystalized lake.

Belladonna Mind

By Caroline Garrow

What is a candy floss touch
to a belladonna mind?
If on fair ivory
rest bruises, black,
maraschino lips
spitting lies.
My crimson heart,
your dilated eyes.



SAM

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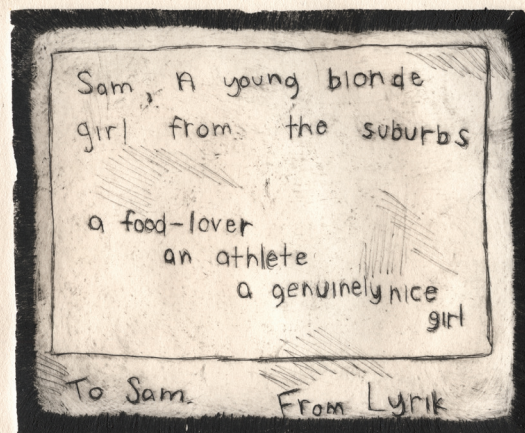
LYRIK 2016



SAM

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LYRIK 2016



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LYRIK 2016



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LYRIK 2016

Sam: A Letter • Lyrik Castro • Printmaking



Emu • Haley Sliwa • Photography

The Gumball Machine

By Andrea Simms

Two grubby fingers pinch
a quarter, the smell of metal
and sugar and numbers:
how many quarters make up
a dollar, how many gumballs
make black lips; blinking
lights, cars, bodies, sneakers
murmur in the background;
this orb of creativity charms the
eyes of children: a supposedly
screen savvy generation
consumed with data and short cuts
and yet the plastic bulb,
impregnated with colorful flavors,
lures all the light in their eyes,
craving and curiosity
mold their bodies in stagnant
amazement as the
two perspiring palms wait,
anticipating the sleek
shine of a gum ball.

Beginning the Game

By Mylo Zaggy

Childhood

It's old, it's dusty
from a time before I was born.
I received my first taste of technology.
My eyes were lit
with a naïve sense of casual play.

Slowly, my grass stained clothes
became clean once more.
My injuries disappeared on the shell
that protected me from my fears.
Here I was accepted and challenged
to go further than those ahead of me.

Here, I could be an explorer
in search for treasure long since forgotten.
I could be an athlete like those
who danced in my dreams.
Or maybe a god,
seeking vengeance on the zeroes and ones.
Here I could be anything.

And yet its claws kept dragging me in
with its tortuous songs of failure.
Although I embodied insanity,
I kept coming back
with a bright face,
beating myself for first place.



Petals • Olivia Land • Printmaking

Shells

By Andrea Simms

Everyone knows the worst way to die is by plastic bag. Maggie Finland is the reason why the “Butterflies from Peru” are being suffocated. Little pieces of me are being forced into a premature death, all so I can “clean up” and “move out the crap.” Apparently a National Geographic calendar is not worthy of living, but the People magazines stacked in the TV room are invited every night for dinner. Who wore it best? The monarch butterfly delicately unfolding its new wings or Britney Spears exploding in yet another tight dress?

My mother always commented on how each follicle of Maggie’s conditioned hair fell neatly into place. There was a lot that my mother didn’t know about Maggie Finland. Maggie wore her mother’s perfume and let Tom Nelson kiss her neck, after school on Mondays. However, even if my mother did know this, she would only ask about the scent of perfume.

My mother had a way of disrupting the stillness of my life. Nothing could stay if it did not serve a purpose. That which I held closest to my heart was always whisked away: magazines, photographs, aquariums. Possibly the most profound cleaning up she did was sweeping away my “good for nothing, lazy father.”

On Mondays, I set three plates for dinner, two plastic cups, and one wine glass. I have to wait until eleven o’clock for my mother to walk Maggie home. I see my mother try to conceal a smile as she follows Maggie out the front door. I feel bad that my mother was stuck with me. She wanted a daughter who would share gossip, pick out shoes with her, and drool over dreamy celebrities. She wanted someone like Maggie; I wish she wouldn’t pretend to hide that.

Maggie is always talking about herself. She told me that her schoolwork was so hard that her mother couldn’t even figure it out. I never saw Maggie do her schoolwork, but I couldn’t imagine it was much different than mine. I had a hard time doing my homework with Maggie around, her mother’s perfume suffocated me. Her petulant voice hammered like a confused rooster.

Today is Tuesday. Yesterday my mother had friends over, the familiar lipstick-stained wine glass directed Maggie and I upstairs without hesitation. I dreadfully approached the stairs. I never took Maggie into my room. I never took anyone in my room. It was the one part of me that was never critiqued. I looked back hoping Maggie had disappeared. Maggie looked up at me smirking, “Have you ever stolen a glass of wine from one of your mom’s parties?” She already knew the answer, but she loved how her voice sounded when she talked about topics I knew nothing about.

We devoured the stairs. Maggie could hardly contain herself, another opportunity to dissect my life. Her manicured hands were already twisting the knob. The door thrust open, as did Maggie’s eyes. “Sam! Your room is a total disaster! Oh my gosh. Well that explains why you wear that gross dragon fly t-shirt everyday. I wouldn’t be able to find anything decent in this mess either.” Really, this didn’t bother me. Maggie watched as her words slipped off my surface. She immediately started towards my desk, searching through piles of notes and books.

“Hey, come on Maggie. We are supposed to be doing our homework.” I sat down and watched her burrow through letters from my pen pal in Virginia, postcards from my grandma, my collection of drawings of dragonflies.

Between the clinking of the glasses from downstairs and the ruffling of paper, I let my mind carry me to a different place. I blocked out the image of Maggie’s pink nails and conjured up a wonderful scene. The pond at dusk has a marvelous array of critters. They all had a place to settle when the night grabbed their sight. They all knew how to survive in independence. Oh, isn’t it marvelous.

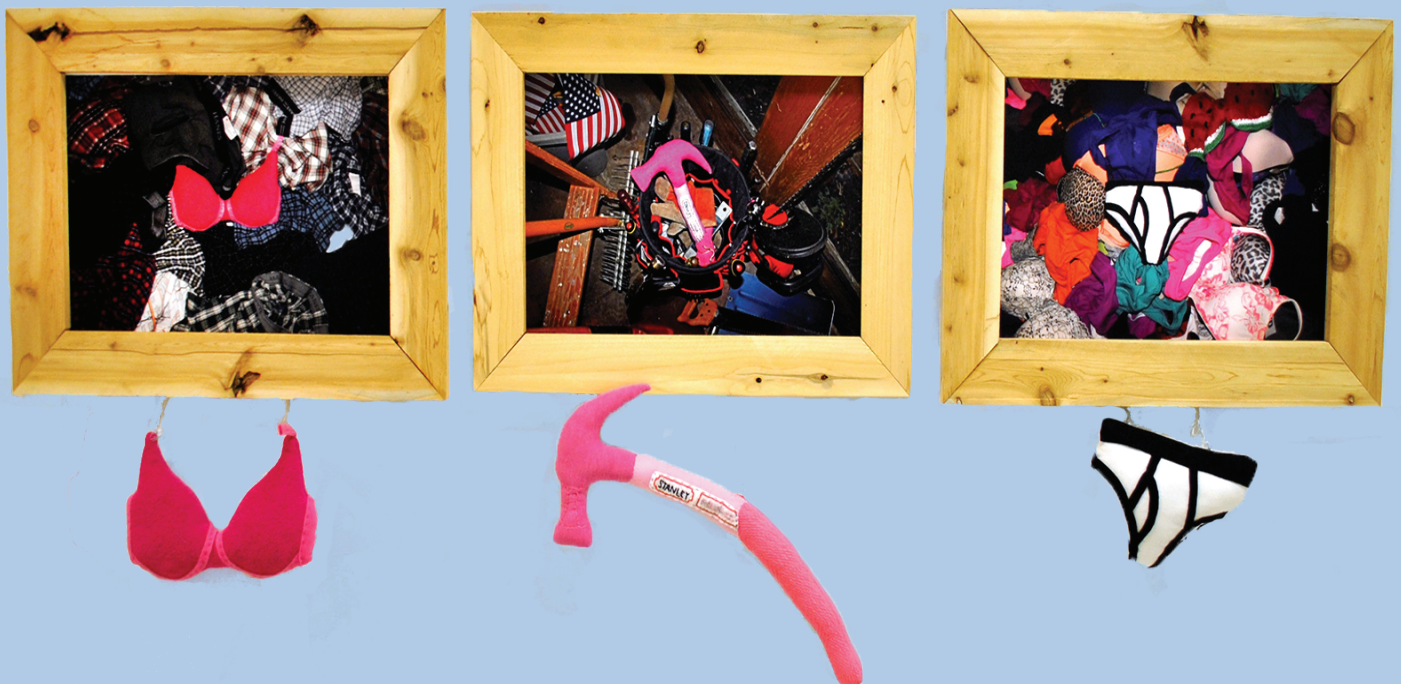
Somehow a sound managed to infiltrate my thoughts. “Sam, this is absolutely disgusting! God, what is wrong with you?” I laughed to myself. If only the world could be as perfect as Maggie. Searching the room for

Maggie's object of disgust I saw her holding the one treasure I was actually hiding. A flash of hope that I might be able to block this out but my imagination doesn't have enough strength.

"Wow, I haven't cleaned up in such a long time," I tried in a defeated tone. Her teeth burst through the sides of the Mason jar as she observed its contents with disgust. I couldn't blame the cicada shells for shaking with fear as her blistering eye glared at them.

"You are such a hoarder! What even are they? You better tell me or I'm telling your mom and the whole school." Her voice doesn't reach me; it had a hard time breaking through her cloud of perfume. She can tell my mother. She can tell the whole school. I will not let her control every aspect of my life. I can shake her from my wings.

I did not tell Maggie Finland that these were the cicada shells my father and I plucked off the bark of an elm tree. I did not tell Maggie Finland that he studied these shells, and many others, while my mother paced outside of his locked room. I did not tell Maggie Finland that the day after we plucked the shells he got on a train and left me with two hollow cicada shells. I did not tell Maggie Finland. I did not tell my mother. It is my secret. I slowly stood up, keeping my eyes locked to the ground, approached Maggie. The Mason jar looked so stupid in her hot pink hands. I took back the jar. I stared at the two embracing shells, suffocating from the smell of "Butterfly Kisses."



Juxtaposition Study • Natalie Krause • Mixed Media

Birds

By Philip Kim

In the afternoon, I sat at my lonely desk,
a prisoner to my own, confining thoughts,
trapped between the room's
monochrome walls.

The dull shade of beige
(a color I never particularly enjoyed)
surrounded me, as I pondered aimlessly
about the soft, spring sky.

In front of me, only a flat pane of glass
separated me from nature's warm embrace.
The glowing sunlight shone through the window,
beckoning me to join Mother Nature in her freedom.

I pictured myself in a place free of tensed muscles
and clenched teeth,
free of the calloused skin around my nails.
Away from the empty glasses
and unopened letters,
I could only imagine.

For April showers had already come,
pouring down like a heavy burden.
Yet for the May flowers,
I waited still.

But I caught a glimpse of a flock of birds
outside my window, drifting under the
golden, burning sun.
I marveled at their freedom, their ability
to travel the ends of the earth.

I listened to the song they cry
when their wings are sore
and bodies are beaten.
The emerald tune that instills courage,
a song composed solely for me.

And like all things that fly,
the birds departed as quickly as they came,
leaving behind a promise of better things,
a sliver of hope to latch onto.

And every time I felt helpless again,
I closed my eyes, imagining that gentle song,
and waited for
the arrival of the birds.



1/2 Kaylee Miller 2015

Colette • Kaylee Miller • Printmaking



Portal • Noah Denton • Mixed Media



Bracelet • Vassiliki Demakis • Metals

Syndrome

By Carol Cotts

Nearly twenty years had passed, yet the child within her thrived. She was trusting, naïve, so juvenile but grown. It must be nice to be capable of such keen trust. Enthusiastic about the most simplistic things, I envied her innocence; I envied her everlasting youth. No homework to worry about, no social pressures to worry about, right? It wasn't until I was older that I understood. I was the older sister to my older sister, and our interactions were never natural. At a young age, I was jealous of all the attention. It was an immersing fusion of pity and spite and self-loathing for even being envious in the first place and back to guileless pity. It wasn't since the early stages of childhood that I felt at home with her. The mentality of a child in the bodies of the young, we clicked like two ordinary feuding sisters.

As I got older and attended high school, our interests diverged, as did our close correlation, eternally bounded by the everlasting bind of childhood. I can still recall our kingdom of youth; the rose-tinted walls with the pink butterfly clock, the room pitch-black apart from the hallway light trickling in through the bedroom door cracked open approximately two inches. Every aspect was just as it must be in our innocuous dwelling. It was dead silent and peaceful, except for her gentle breathing just barely audible on the opposite end of the dark room. My eyelids were heavy with exhaustion, on the verge of drifting off to sleep, but only until her worries and questions and fear would seep in and relinquish the peace, would I be safe. Do I dare answer? Should I disregard it, pretend to be sleeping? Should I try to keep the reassurances flowing until there is nothing left to assuage?

"Are you still awake?" she would whisper, breaking a muddled silence.

"Yes."

"Why do I have to be different?" she would ask.

"Everybody's different."

"No. Somebody called me the 'R word' today."

"Don't listen to them. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Try and get some sleep now, alright?"

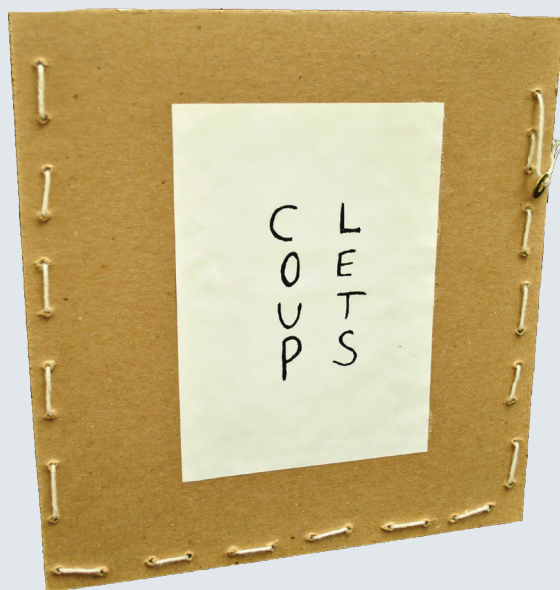
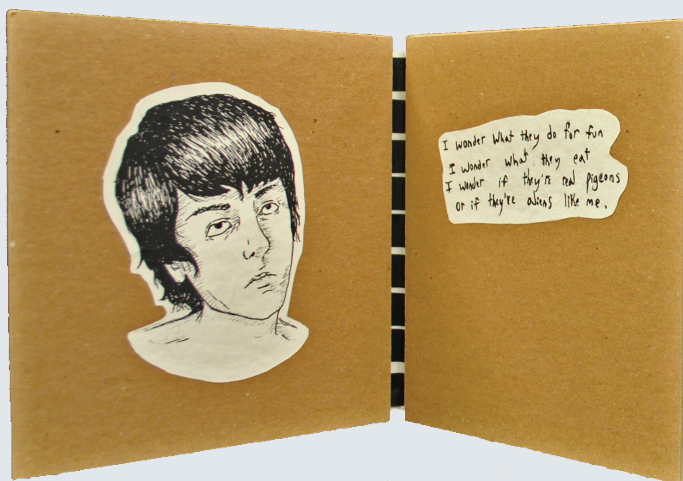
And that was our routine. She was constantly in fear of being deemed "different." I wanted to help her, but there wasn't anything to be done. The worst part was that she was aware of it all. She was aware of her condition unlike some of those like her. She was aware of why she was in different classes. She was aware that I would soon go off to college and she would continue to stay at home with our parents through adulthood. She was usually very happy and quickly made friends with everyone around her but could only really relate to others like her, who lived miles away, and that she would only see biannually.

"*Why did this happen to her?*" I wondered. Out of all the people in all the cities in all the countries in the world, why did *she* have it? I thought *I* was supposed to be the younger sister. *I* was supposed to look to *her* when I needed to, not the other way around.

I could never neglect the moments when she came home from school, her cheeks hot with tears as she slammed the door of our former kingdom of childhood, retreating to isolation because somebody had called her "retarded." I wanted nothing more than to be excluded from it. I didn't want to be near her, because I was incapable of alleviating her pain. I was helpless.

She's the bravest person I know, and uses all of her talents in the most creative and genuine way. She's funny, and full of a brilliant and avid kindness, the kind that radiates from her smile and makes you wish you could feel that kind of love towards your sister.

How can such a rare and amazing person sprout from an error in a genetic code, a mutation of a chromosome? But this was not a "disability." It's a difference in genetics, and everyone has genetic *differences*. Right? What was unique though is that she didn't just have a genetic *difference*; in a way, it was like a superpower. She was able to see the world with such a fresh perspective. She was young, insightful, innocent, humane, the ideal constituents of an ideal sister. In a sense, I suppose she was immortal.



Couplets • Rachael Larsen • Mixed Media

A Diner and a Chair

By Owen Post

The diner was never so packed as the day that the man waited, sweating, for his girlfriend to arrive for their anniversary lunch. The kind of packed that made it hard to breathe. The day was hot, and the swelling mass of muscle and panting mouths made it hotter. Businessmen out to lunch sat burning in wife beaters, suits cast off to the floor. They didn't look down as waitresses and patrons trampled the garments underneath. Your thoughts were not yours in that stuffy air, your head was not your own but the same looping process that everyone else had. Water and static filled every person's brains. Despite the crowds, the staff seemed unbothered. They meandered about, smiling sweetly, sans sweat, shifting through the clockwork of bodies walking between the tables. Coffees filled with a wink of the eye, and then the waitresses would ease to the back, where cooks laughed and played hacky sack with no sense of tomorrow.

The man kept his eyes down, lifting them for drinks of soda and glances at his watch. At the edge of the table across from him was an empty seat and a fresh red rose. Even from his position he could smell it thick in his nose. To his right and left patrons inhaled deeply, filling themselves with its crisp and sweet fragrance. Another sip. Another glance. Interview was taking longer than expected, he thought. She had told him not to worry, and that she might be late, but times are tough and she needed this job, and with a kiss and a glance back she had left him two hours earlier. He had called out "Good luck."

But wait.

No.

Her eyes. He couldn't remember where her eyes had been focusing. Where were her eyes? Had they been looking into his or somewhere else?

The man took a frantic sip of soda and tried to picture what else she could have been looking at in his apartment. He was sure of it; she hadn't been looking at him.

A hacky sack went flying somewhere in the back and took a couple mugs down with it. The air was heavy, and as they fell to the ground they burrowed through the air until they became one thousand inconsequential pieces. The man thought there was some kind of symbolism in the shattered pieces that tiled the floor. But then he called himself an idiot for making anything out of a dollar's worth of cheap ceramic mugs and returned to his watch.

The waitress was watching him; he could feel it on his neck. She had college bills to pay and there he was, taking up a table, just drinking soda, while waiting for some chick to appear. His girlfriend was thirty minutes late. He took another sip. His pay had never been enough for her, and he knew that. She never looked him in the eyes anymore; it was scrawled there that he was not enough.

The man could almost hear what the waitress was certainly thinking. *She'll be a no-show anyway.* Screw you too, lady, he thought. The man reached for his soda, but he stopped himself. In one fluid motion, he reached into his backpack. He had had five sodas already. Drink too much soda, they know you're nervous, he thought. Look through your phone, and they can smell the panic in you. Sit there doing nothing, and the wolves have you by the throat. Don't show weakness, or they win.

They, they, they.

He rummaged through his pack, tossing around the whatever he had inside. He pretended that there was something incredibly interesting to be seen, and then he closed up his pack and looked up. Almost immediately the staff door swung open, and he made eye contact with the waitress. She was laughing. So were the hacky sackers. So was the whole staff of the diner laughing, laughing, laughing.

He felt sick. An hour passed, and the man held his face down the entire time.

He gave sharp and practiced glances to the left and right. He rose and felt sweat running down his body towards the earth, always towards the earth, burrowing. The man stepped gingerly over the businessmen's suits and entered the bathroom. He vomited. Sick boiled out of him, hot and burning like the air, like the diner, like the long and lasting glances of every person who had ever given him long and lasting glances, like all the patrons of the diner. His throat tensed; for an instant he thought that he would empty out everything inside of him until his toe bones fell out of his mouth. He liked the thought. The pleasant fantasy subsided though, and he remembered what all the bodies were certainly thinking.

*I'll bet he's got his fingers all up his nose. Filthy habit.
Guy's going in there to do drugs. Shameless, really.
Been in there a while now.*

And then the bile stopped. The man looked into the mirror, into his own eyes. They burned. It hurt to look into his own eyes, and the hurt magnified approaching infinity as the photons bounced from his eyes to the mirror and back again.

And suddenly, he felt nothing.

He unlatched the door and walked out. His girlfriend had arrived. She had thrown her suit to the floor, and sat drinking his soda. Of course there was something wrong. There was something in her hair, in her shirt, in her mouth, some detail he was missing; some detail that held all the answers for why she surely hated him.

She smiled at him, and, happy, he smiled back. She fell into talking, eyes gazing into his, telling him all about the interview, and her hopes for the new job. The man caught the waitress's eyes again; her sick smile saying over and over *Poor worthless man*.

But he smiled at her. Some piece of him that he would never see again sat floating in the diner's toilet, and the world looked more bright and beautiful than he had ever seen. He had always known people were watching him, laughing at him, but he had never seen how their eyes could be so blue. Nor had he ever seen how white their mouth-daggers could be. It was so beautiful.

The rose had wilted across from him, and sat pushed off to the side, the most vibrant shade of brown the man had ever seen.

Lunette

By Bria Holt

"You'll look like James Dean," Lunette said, holding up the over-sized leather jacket. The massive sleeves were worn but the zippers still shiny. I scoffed, returning to organizing a collection of glass mason jars. "Sure I will."

The antique store was my home and future legacy. I'd spent hours combing through piles of broken typewriters, tubs of costume jewelry and finding rare oddities such as *Sherlock Holmes* lunch boxes and pocket watches with backwards numbers. My family had owned this place for three generations and I was excited to continue the trend. Most other kids found the family business a burden. I saw it as a gift.

"You've already got the greased hair," Lunette persisted, following me down an aisle of music boxes and shabby chic furniture.

"It's not greased, it's gelled. Like an Abercrombie model," I retorted, instinctively reaching up and smoothing the carefully shaped locks.

"Uh huh." Lunette gave me her signature look of amused disbelief and proceeded to admire a rack of 1920s flapper dresses. While I worked, she spent hours twirling in front of cracked mirrors, eyes eagerly taking in the lace and tulle and fluffy feminine frocks. Sometimes she would travel through the piles of junk, radiant in a Victorian ball gown or 80s prom dress. Her favorite was the sparkly princess dress with puffy sleeves.

Lunette and I ruled the kingdom together. When we were young, we spent years playing medieval make-believe. I was the fearless knight, laden with tinfoil armor and a wooden sword from the Renaissance Faire. Lunette was the Iron Queen, because according to my mother damsels in distress were considered a sexist and stereotypical portrayal of women.

Lunette and I still played games. After all these years, we still galloped down the school hallways, waving our imaginary swords and shields. We fought dragons in the woods near my house and called up fairies in the glen. When we played those games, I was safe and happy. Nothing bad could ever touch me. The only thing I saw was Lunette's laughing smile. She never complained; she never argued. We were perfectly in sync about everything, and that was the way I liked it. I felt like I could confess the darkest parts of myself, and I would find no judgement in her clear blue eyes.

Lunette was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. She was the only girl I had ever bothered to see. Unearthly blonde hair and bubblegum lips that curved in radiant laughter. As I reached my teen years I hung up my tinfoil armor, but she had held onto her dresses and crown. She held onto her queenly manner and insisted I act like the gentlemen that was expected of me.

"My liege."

Jolted out of my thoughts, I turned to see Lunette brandishing a rapier sword with a similarly wicked smile. I slowly bowed, then plucked the sword out of her grasp and took off down the aisle.

"You bottom-dwelling scum!" She called after me, commencing the chase. I grinned over my shoulder as her shrieking laughter fell into the distance. As I rounded a corner, I tumbled over a pile of vintage propaganda posters. I suddenly lay within a wasteland of paper. Heaving an impatient sigh, I bent down and began to gather them up one by one.

But something caught my eye. Something that was most definitely not a newspaper. Something glossy and fresh and bold. I held it up to my nose, and my stomach dropped as if on a rollercoaster. It was a *Playboy*, an edition so old that the woman was still classy and not damned to objectification. The woman was draped across a Mustang with a coy smile. She had the classic bombshell look, a perfect French manicure, and cleavage a mile long. There was a hitch in my breathing and a knot in my belly that felt very unfamiliar. The woman wasn't flying with fairies or dueling with dragons. She was real, as real as she could be under artificial lights and flawless make-up.

"Eli?" Lunette's voice sounded from behind me, breaking my reverie. I spun around, but there was no one there. The voice had gone, like mist withdrawing its faded fingers. All my life she had appeared out of the blue skies and endless castles. I got to my feet and began to trudge back through the towers of the past.



Tranquil Evening • Kyle Leonida • Digital



When Will They Learn

By Hailey Shah

One needs to look no further than ancient Egyptian society to understand why, by heritage, I am an authority on this subject. In Ancient Egyptian society, when my forefathers' souls passed on to the next life, family members actually shaved their eyebrows to signify their loss. My kind was so revered that harming a single hair on our heads, even accidentally, would warrant the death penalty. My ancestors were worshipped, sculpted in bronze and deified. With such grand heritage, one would think that today's modern families with whom my kind lives would look to us, the felines, as examples in everything they do. Yet I have found this is hardly the case. I wish to share a few examples of my personal experience with this lack of respect for my kind's history of greatness, and therefore, authority to guide on how to live properly.

My first prime example is Hailey, a girl of fourteen, who in the wee hours of every morning dashes into the bathroom in a futile attempt to prepare herself for the day. Among many other efforts, she smears a glob of lipstick across her lips with only a broken, crooked line to show for herself after several minutes of labor. This ritual is followed by a mad dash back to the closet as she hears Mom scream that she is going to be late for school. The closet doors are abruptly swept open and a frantic search begins as each item is met with disdain: too long, too short, too dorky, out of style, used to belong to her older cousin. Within minutes, all she has to show for her efforts is a mismatched ensemble for the day and a bedroom wasteland of rejected fashion don'ts. Upon observing this daily anxiety producing commotion, I wonder why Hailey does not look up to, respect and emulate my perfect time-tested example of how to prepare oneself in the morning. Each morning, after slowly sauntering into the tranquil bliss known as the sunroom, I begin to soothingly bathe myself with my trusted salivary sponge. I calmly and peacefully smooth my luscious fur until it sparkles like a diamond in the sun. Then I stroll into the kitchen where my classic tiger-striped collar awaits me. It is promptly snapped around my neck in a space of two seconds and I adorn it proudly for the remainder of the day. It must also be noted that at no point during my routine for ideal preparation, after which I emerge as the pinnacle of the fashion world, does anyone scream at me "you're going to be late!"

My next piece of evidence to present my case is Justin, a boy of eleven, who drowsily drags himself out of bed each morning with a singular focus in an effort to entertain himself. He robotically positions himself in front of a computer screen and proceeds to waste ten consecutive minutes by methodically shooting at the same alien running back and forth on the screen. He lingers there emotionless until his eyes are red and back is stiff. I witness this mind-numbing practice, thinking to myself why he doesn't look to me, respect and emulate my example of how to perfectly entertain oneself? I consciously begin each day by moseying into the sun patio and gazing with full consciousness upon colorful birds zooming across the open landscape, tiny insects dotting the patio like dollops of frosting on a cake, and enjoying a multitude of diverse noises surrounding me, each more exciting than the next. I must point out that my choice of entertainment always leaves me feeling alive, engaged, refreshed and energized.

Mom frets constantly about what she will cook and toils like a prison inmate to simultaneously read a recipe, measure ingredients, curses when she finds out she doesn't have the ingredients on hand, finds the appropriate pan in a sea of half-clean dishes in the sink. All the while, a mystery brew on the stove is bubbling, spitting, and spewing. If by some miracle the food makes it to the table, it's gobbled and gulped by the family who then runs off. The kitchen that is left behind appears to be a toxic dumpsite. I often wonder to myself why she doesn't follow, respect, and emulate my perfect example of how she and the family should enjoy a perfect culinary experience. My culinary adventures begin with a simple plastic bowl. Once the delicate morsels from the large bag in the pantry cascade into the bowl with an appetizing crunch, I sniff the bowl and critique it as if it were a fine wine. As my watering mouth descends into the bounty, I pause to appreciate each and every individual bite. All that is left when I have finished my satisfying meal is the empty sparkling clean plate that I had just licked spotless.

Finally, I can conjure up no better expression to describe Dad than “workaholic.” To watch Dad attempt to gather his belongings and flee to the confining, impersonal office where he will be restrained for the remaining portion of each day is almost like viewing an inept circus act. From my perspective, Dad is a daily blur of ties, suit coats, dress shoes, briefcases, papers flying in and out of briefcases, computers, and incoming cell phone calls frantically inquiring if he can get on a plane this afternoon because sales are down in wherever. I ask myself why Dad also does not look up to, respect and emulate my wonderful example of a perfectly balanced lifestyle. I clearly carefully construct each one of my days so that all my responsibilities and leisure are in perfect harmony. Every single day is a carefully crafted cycle of eat, sleep, play, visit litter box. Followed by eat, sleep, play, visit litter box. No stress. No surprises that take me off of this perfect plan. I feel I should also point out that unlike Dad, I have never once received a frantic message that might suggest there is an area where I may be lagging and now my immediate attention is required.

Do I dare think that the practices of the Ancient Egyptians will be revived one day in relation to my kind? If so, then modern society would soon realize the error of its ways and would begin to again play close attention to the felines. Once modern society begins to play closer attention to the cats, I am convinced that the lifestyle of a cat would be soon be emulated by every human in every corner of the Earth. Maybe this will happen one day, but until then, I will continue to wait patiently on my fuzzy blanket in the daytime sun, trying to be an example of a life properly lived for at least one family.



Natalie is Tired of Dogs • Juan Ortega • Mixed Media



Stitching What She Sees Fit • Katrina Pasquinelli • Mixed Media

The First Time

By Sarah Orozco

The first time
I catch a moment
it weighs a thousand pounds.

I bury gritted teeth
and all-or-nothing emotions
in a bitter iron box
of psychic tears.

My spirit is found
under the roses that spring up
in pale pink and baby blue.
I slice them with garden scissors
But they keep growing back.

The moments only get heavier.



Aquatic Gold • Sarah Cada • Jewelry

Abstraction Poem

By Josephine Coleman

An airy heavy blanket,
shielding answers,
settles clammily onto my skin.

A dark mist overcomes the air around me,
air vanishes as I walk, only returning
as I near a vibrant mirage.

Secrets, fruit hanging just out of reach,
grin mischievously. The branches bend
low, enticing me, promises of revelations
to bring me near.

A word echoes throughout the space: jump.
It's soft, growing louder as it pounds into
my skull, filling my skull until it's all I know.

My eyes refuse to leave
the gleaming fruit. I jump to
grab hold, greedy fingers brushing
against the silky skin, only to feel
emptiness as I fall into the darkness.



Flower Girl • Kate Hoekstra • Mixed Media

The Sixth Sense was BS

By Erin Hamilton

The reason old people are so hunched over is that they're weighed down from having to carry around everyone they've lost.

That's what I kept thinking at my parents' funeral, then at my own, and then throughout the days I've spent watching my brother's and best friend's lives unfold. We useless dead take the form of delicate things, a beat up watch glued to Allan's wrist, the ever-expanding mane craning Madison's neck, or a wedding ring for a tiny finger tied by a chain to a dead girl's neck.

I used to think it was perfectly healthy to keep a little bit of the people you love. Now that I'm dead and have nothing to do but watch and think, I've had plenty of time to reconsider, and I've concluded that it's pretty messed up. A symbol is not a person, and we couldn't care less if you show your undying devotion to us with some silly little trinket. Name your kids after us if you must have some reminder, but for God's sake quit hoarding us like collectibles. Sometimes, I just wish I could scream at them for it.

"Allan, that watch doesn't even work!" I yell, soundlessly, as he binds it to his wrist morning after morning. "Madison, you hate wearing your hair long, just cut it off already!" I try, as her thick, heavy hair breaks another hair tie. But they can't hear me; Allan continues to drag our father around with him, and my dead weight heats Madison's neck in the summer. Never mind that the clock face is scratched and the hands are frozen at 4:13. Never mind that I'm not there to nag Madison about keeping her long, beautiful hair, or braid it before school.

I've been dead about three months now, and for some reason I'm still hanging around. The dead weight of a delicate chain and a simple ring is what anchors me, I think. When she was alive, we could always tell Mom was off in another world when she began absentmindedly playing with her wedding ring, twisting it, tugging it off and slipping it back on. We used to say that the weight of the ring was the only thing that kept her from just floating away. She was such a tiny woman, and her head was always in the clouds anyway. After their accident, it mocked me, resting there heavily on her finger.

"It doesn't look right," Allan had said when we finally gathered the strength of mind and stomach to look at them in their caskets. At first, I thought he had meant the vacancy of their expressions which so sharply contrasted the dimpled smiles, crinkled noses, creased eyes we knew. He didn't; his eyes were locked on that little silver ring, tethering her to earth.

"She's stuck," I whispered. In my grief-stricken, twelve-year-old thoughts it made sense. Allan's brain must have gone to mush too because he nodded and slipped the ring off her finger.

From then on, I carried Mom and Allan carried Dad. We bound them to us with a battered wristband and a little clasp. I wonder now if it hurt them to watch us stagnate, always frozen in the moment of their deaths. After all, they went with us to lonely birthdays, foster homes, and uncelebrated holidays. The ring was still strung around my neck the night I died, the heat from the fire making it burn a perfect circle between my collarbones.

When I kicked the bucket, Allan couldn't bear to look at me, and at my closed casket wake it was guaranteed that he never could. I'm happy, for his sake, that he didn't. The grief of losing the last of his family was enough; it would've been too much for him to see me looking...well, the way I was after the fire. No souvenirs could be taken from my body, because no one who saw me could recognize the supposed significance of anything on me that hadn't burned up. So the little ring that I never, ever parted from in life was shut up in a casket and finally made it to the ground, next to Mom's grave where it should've been. It was a little black, a little tarnished, and had the faintest rust-colored trace that refused to wash away. I know because even in my formless, intangible state, I feel it on my throat, throbbing like a pulse. I want to rip it off, but my fingertips pass through it. I'm stuck.



Sister • Grace Reilly • Printmaking

How can I explain my death? Well, I can't really. It's not real enough. For me, there is only what I already knew, earth and its eternity. There was no sparkly escalator to heaven, no fiery pit to open its mouth and swallow me whole. It's simply a world full of people who cannot see me. One day, the band of Allan's watch breaks. He keeps it. Madison's hair starts getting caught in things, like her locker door. She doesn't cut it. People die in town. They don't join me. I am mostly alone with my brother, and when he sleep-talks during nightmares I know that he's stuck, too, always in the moment of my death. His dreams are of suffocation, the smell of burning hair, and the heat of a doorknob in my hand that won't turn. I try not to give much thought to all that. My thoughts always linger on the ring on my throat.

On bad days, when the hair she grew on my insistence gives Madison headaches, and Allan is haunted by dreams of screaming and fire, and the ring won't stop pounding, I wonder if I could pass through the earth into my grave and tear it from my own blackened flesh. In these fantasies, the chain rests solidly in my vaporous palm and burns like fire. As I yank on it, and it tears at my skin and clings stubbornly to its place, the eyelids bolt open in a flash of green, and then I'm back in my body, trapped in my coffin, clawing at the chain that chokes me.



Mirror Image • Natalie Krause • Photography

Future

By Cayden Olsen

A tawny wood guitar
sits in my bedroom
silenced by a thick fabric case.

It leans against the closet door
like the nine year old
in that stiff black coat,
pressed to the brick wall
waiting to be picked up from school.

Eighteen thin bars lay under out of tune strings
plucked only by picks
and unhardened hands.

Leaking out are rooms with scuffed floors
and circles of cross-legged children
fading day by day,
counting towards the fret of adulthood.

A Girl's Weak Spot

By Laura McAllister

Ryan, his uncertain head
shiny with fear, guided my foot--
right between my legs, he muttered,
moments before he crumbled
onto the slippery woodships
and I, laughing, played anchor with my toes
and tugged at his hand. It melted into mine
like a quivering star begging an eye
for recognition.
When will you show me
a girl's weak spot? he asked
and once again I said tomorrow
though I wasn't sure I'd ever found one.
So I swept droplets from the balance bars
as he chased the summit of the rain-greased slide
and slid back down.

The Moon and the Stars

By Abigail Cundiff

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss you'll land among the stars."

-Norman Vincent Peale

I shot for the moon
and I missed
and I hoped I'd be caught
in the web of glittering constellations that lay beyond.
But I did not fall amongst the twinkling lights,
I have not been caught,
but I have yet to fall
into oblivion.

Instead,
I hover in the space
between the moon and the stars,
the space between something
and nothing.
So I wait to see whether I will be welcomed
by my celestial starry brethren,
or whether I will simply fade into the shadowy space
behind all of the many brilliant moons and stars.



Inferno • Armin Korsos • Photography



I Wanna Go Home • Samantha Horvath • Mixed Media

Hit

By Laura McAllister

Your fingers roll
like thunder, and for a moment
I believe my skull is doomed to be dough,

the way she had me
when I was a puddle of bones
in the palm of her hand, and

I'm weak to flinch--after all, that smirk,
playful, doesn't match hers--
but it's a mirror image (I am flipped)

and that laugh, that perfect, awful laugh, is identical
though not as ambiguous, and so when I choke
I can better mimic your sounds than I ever could

hers, making you more willing
to loosen my sweat-stained collar after
you've buttoned me blue,

and I am quicker now than ever
to my wobbly knees, splintered shins
and cheeks singed tints,

harrowing.



Dog Bite • Rachael Larsen • Printmaking



Bottled City • Isabel Castillo • Ceramic



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Colophon

Menagerie is the annual student-run literary and art magazine of Lyons Township High School, home to about 4,000 students and 300+ certified staff. It is a juried magazine whose participants work entirely outside of the school day. Students submit their poems, short stories, plays, and art by January. In February, the poetry, prose, and editorial staffs meet after school for about a month to read, discuss, and evaluate the pieces based on quality of writing, style, originality, emotional accessibility, and subject matter. From the literary staff's short lists, the literary advisors make the final selections and edit those pieces for grammatical and technical errors. In the following month, the art staff meets several days per week to integrate artwork with similarly themed literary pieces. Other exceptional art is selected for individual layouts. The art staff uses the computer program InDesign to create the magazine spreads. Finally, in early April, the editorial staff makes the final edits of the spreads before the finished product is sent to the printer.



Dog • Marina Auwerda • Photography

Cover: Matte Aqueous

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